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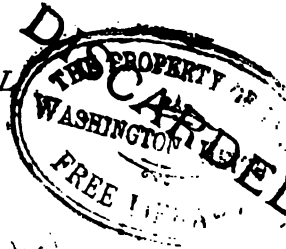
M. J. Thompson  
No.





JACK HORNER

A NOVEL



BY

Nicholas

MARY SPEAR TIERNAN

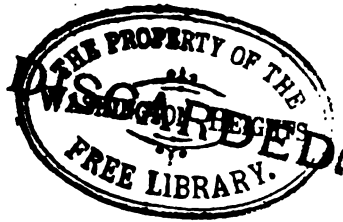
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## JACK HORNER.

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### I.

#### OUR BUGLES SANG TRUCE.

It was Christmas Eve in the year 1862. The bloodiest engagement of the advance of the Army of the Potomac on Richmond had taken place not many days before. Burnside, having fruitlessly thrown division after division of the flower of his army into the fire on the heights of Fredericksburg, had retired to count his dead, and eventually to be relieved of his command. Lee and Jackson behind their breastworks, thanking God for the repulse of the enemy, waited vainly for Burnside to make another attack, and there was a temporary lull in hostilities.

Christmas Eve happened that year on unusually fine weather. Night fell on Richmond clear and cold, with all the crackle and sparkle of the good old holiday time. The sky, gleaming with steely points, matched the frosty air, tingling with pins and needles, while frozen streets echoed to the click of hurrying feet and ringing hoofs. It was about the hour when fireside lamps are lighted and curtains drawn close in the domestic circle. This circle in a certain large, comfortable-looking house

on Franklin Street consisted of a Mr. Pritchard, an old bachelor and his spinster sister. Miss Pritchard, who loved the twilight and whose lamps were not lighted yet, stood at one of her parlor windows looking on the passers-by, most of whom were laden with presents or provender for the morrow. Her thoughts, like those of other old people at this season, were busy with the Christmases of long ago, comparing the festivities of her youth, when Richmond was jovial in peace and plenty, and its condition now, when its plenty was pinched and a deep, prophetic sadness underlay its gayety. Her mind was suddenly recalled to present interests by a man with a market basket, larger and seemingly heavier than usual, — this being a period when the Richmond market basket was proverbially of light weight, — passing directly under her window. The old lady was in the dark, but there was light enough in the street to show that the man, whose face was shaded by the visor of a military cap, had a young, alert figure and wore a shabby gray uniform.

"I do believe somebody has sent us a Christmas turkey!" she said to herself, standing on tiptoe, pressing her little gray curls against the frosty pane, in an attempt to see if she were right in supposing that the man had turned in at her door. The next moment a sharp pull at the bell dispelled all doubt.

"Who in the world can it be?" running over in her mind the friends who were likely to be able to spare so substantial an offering at a time when a turkey was cheap at twenty dollars, and everybody's larder, besides being scantily supplied, had unusually pressing

demands. She lighted her lamp, in order to get a better view of the forthcoming gift, with a flutter of pleasurable excitement akin to that of a child investigating a well-filled stocking in the dark of a Christmas dawn.

"My! my! What can Afra be making such a noise at the door for?" she asked herself, when the hasty ring was answered. "I'm afraid she's got Christmas in her bones. Her recipe for plum-pudding calls for high seasoning."

Afra was the cook. Her name was a contraction of Africa, and it suited well. She was so vast and black as to suggest a dark continent in her own person. And Afra ruled the roast, not only in the kitchen but everywhere else, as the expression implies, with a subtle suggestion that the stomach is the seat of government.

The noise increased. Exclamations in a big round tone of wonderment continued to make themselves heard, until finally Afra burst into the room with a huge market basket in one hand, while with the other she invoked Heaven to witness "dat somebody had gone an' lef' a baby at Miss Patty Pritchard's do!"

Miss Pritchard's pleasurable excitement was swallowed up in horror. "A baby!" she gasped; then recovering her voice, and forgetting in her excitement that the culprit, who had had some minutes the start, was probably well out of the way, "Run, Afra! I saw the man who did it. He had a soldier's cap drawn over his face and wore a shabby gray uniform. Run, I tell you!"

Afra was not built for speed, but her spirit was equal to any emergency, especially on the eve of high festi-

val. Putting aside the impediments of baby and basket by dumping them in the middle of the parlor floor, she dashed out of the room and gave chase. Once in the street, her course was by no means plain sailing. Miss Pritchard's description of the man, which had seemed vividly individual, proved to be confusingly general. Every other man wore a shabby gray uniform and, the night being cold, his cap well on. But Afra's suspicion fastened with the force of conviction on one who seemed to have reasons of his own for hugging the wall as he moved quietly along in its shadow.

The woman's loud hail, the sail-like flapping of her apron, her great heaving movement as she bore down on the man of war, created hilarious commotion in the street.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted a water wag.

"Go it, old girl!" cried a landsman.

Boys left their fire-crackers to follow in her wake. Grown-up pedestrians stopped to see the fun.

The soldier, evidently a cavalry officer and a good looking fellow, being thus brought into notice, stooped boldly in the circle of light under a gas lamp, and steadying himself by the post, asked with great dignity and a thick voice what she wanted with an officer in the army, "thish time o' night, too?"

"Oh, you know what you been up to, sah!" panted Afra, short of breath and wiping her shining face. "My mistis say as how she seed you lef' a baby on he do'step not five minutes ago, an' she want you to come an' take it away."

Laughter from the bystanders followed this bold accusation. The officer himself seemed in too sublime a

an atmosphere to be amused or astonished at anything. Besides, he never forget his gallantry.

"All right," he hiccuped with immense gravity; "I'll own to the ba-baby, my good woman, and pl-please tell your mistress I'll call and see her in the morning."

A louder laugh greeted this reply, and Afra, abashed at the joke being turned on herself, said less defiantly,

"No, dat won't do, sah. My mistis want you to come now, an' take it right away."

"But you see, I ca-can't come now. I've an engagement with anoth-another la-lady, and I'm behind ti-time," with a helpless movement toward his watch.

The group of listeners were so loud in their applause of the gallant soldier that one or two policemen were attracted to the spot, and the little crowd dispersed to the tune of

"If you want to go to heaven,  
Never jine the cavalry,"

shouted by the boys returning to their fire-crackers.

Afra, seeing her mistake in attacking a man who could with difficulty carry himself without the additional burden of a baby, went home crestfallen and grumbling.

The police, finding a little jollity excusable in a soldier on Christmas Eve, passed discreetly on, leaving him to the friendly embrace of the lamp post. When the sound of their footsteps was lost in the distance, the officer let go the post and glanced cautiously about him. Finding none of his late observers in sight, he walked away without a sign of inebriety.

"By Jupiter! That was an escape!" he exclaimed, quickening his steps almost to a run.



He had not gone more than two squares when another young man, likewise in uniform, standing in shadow apparently waiting for some one, accosted him.

"Stop a moment."

"Thunder! Is that you?" cried the other, pale, with eyes gleaming with suppressed excitement. "You were devilish lucky to get out of the way when you did. Hang me, I never came so near being caught in my life. She singled me out and flew at me keen as a ratter."

"She? Then you encountered one of the fair sex?"

"Fair!" with a grimace, remembering Afra's black face, "that's not the word."

"True, some one has called them the unfair sex."

"Come, without satire, this one was as black as the devil. I am beginning to find the affair serious."

"I hope it will turn out all right with the little beggar."

"Of course it will. And, after all, a long-established practice of robbing hen-roosts ought to make the leaving of one forlorn little chick at a fat barnyard door seem a small matter. In fact, it is a sort of restitution, a squaring up of things. Don't you see?"

"No, I don't see. To me, it is more like the first chapter of a shady romance."

"Of which you and I, who are going back to the army to-morrow, will never learn the sequel."

"Who knows?"

"Well, it is too large a field of conjecture for a street corner on a cold night. Come to my room and have a pipe," taking his comrade by the arm and turn-

ing him face about. "Now don't say no. We are going in opposite directions in the morning, and meet again" —

With this reflection the other was persuaded. As the two tramped down the street, one big and broad shouldered, with the regular cavalry swagger, the other slim and wiry, with the tense, alert bearing of a West Point graduate, they furnished as good a sample as could be had of the stuff of which the Army of Northern Virginia was made.

## II.

### HIS FIRST STAR A BRASS BUTTON.

WHEN Afra, discomfited, got back to her mistress, she found Miss Pritchard so far recovered from the shock of discovering the nature of her Christmas gift as to be examining the contents of the basket, under protest, as it were.

Less than this was not to be expected of the average woman. To be left alone with a strange baby and not to take a peep at it, "just to see what the thing looked like," as Miss Pritchard expressed it, would be asking too much of human nature. But as has been said, it was under protest. She stood as far off as was practicable with seeing the child, her skirts held severely out of the way of contamination with one hand, while with the other she removed the covering until the little face was exposed to view.

There is a sort of royalty about a sleeping baby. The placid dignity, the serene unconsciousness that it is not always welcome to this workaday world, the calm brows unruffled by a single care as to where-withal it shall be fed and clothed, the sensitive mouth that seems to know its lightest sound will bring attendance more surely than the handclapping of an Eastern despot, always impress me with a sense of majesty. Something of this feeling must have momentarily over-



come Miss Pritchard's disgust, for she dropped her skirts and smiled. The sight of a fine boyish head covered with golden down, a curve of dark lashes on firmly rounded cheeks, a red rose of a mouth expanding to a happy smile in the comfortable atmosphere of her fireside, would have melted a harder heart than throbbed in the lady's maidenly bosom. Miss Pritchard was succumbing almost — had she been sure of the status of the child's mother it would have been quite — to the point of a kiss, when Afra, puffing like a steam-engine, returned from her bootless quest. The lady's back stiffened, and she swept her starched skirts out of the way again.

"Don't tell me, Afra," she exclaimed, seeing the cook alone, "that you 've come back without the man who left this child outdoors on a freezing night. Could n't you find the wretch?"

"I foun' one, Miss Patty, but he wan't de right one. I barked up de wrong tree dat time, an' got all de boys a-larfin cos I tackled a drunken man."

"Well, I *am* sorry," said Miss Pritchard, turning her back resolutely on the basket and its contents, "for the child will have to go to the orphan asylum."

"La, Miss Patty!" exclaimed Afra, who by this time had caught sight of the golden head and rosy mouth, "if it be a boy baby, it 'll be a pity to sen' him to de awful 'sylum, for dey mostly die dar, an' the way folks is a-slaughterin' an' killin' one anoder dese days we 'll be wantin' men folks arter a while."

"It *is* hard, Afra," staring at the fire, "but if his parents forsake him, what is to be done?"

"Mebbe he ain't got no parents, po' little honey,"

her dark eyes dilating and her affectionate African heart warming to the morsel in the basket. "Dese is hard times. Folks die mo' dan dey used to. Den de Scriptor say — bless his heart," the child was beginning to move — "dat when father and mother forsake me den de Lord takes me up. Mebbe de Lord 'll put it inter somebody's heart to take you up, honey," suiting the action to the word by lifting the child out of his basket and cuddling him on her broad bosom. "La, Miss Patty, as I 'm alive, here 's a letter pinned to his frock!"

"A letter?" echoed Miss Patty, getting out her spectacles. Then, as if a little ashamed of her haste, "I should really like to see what excuse they have to make. Give me the letter."

Afra, intensely interested, stood with her head on one side, her mouth working, as if trying to help her mistress out with the words which came with tantalizing slowness.

"This boy was born in honorable wedlock and baptized John. His father is a soldier in the field; his mother a saint in heaven. If it enters into the heart of any good man or woman to take care of the child until the war is ended, he will be reclaimed; and may the merciful obtain mercy. Christmas Eve, 1862."

"Dar now! Dat 's a good word," said Afra promptly. "Real Christchun writin. An' I knowed he was a boy baby as soon as I put my eye on him."

"Afra," said Miss Pritchard severely, "pin this note on the child again and put him back in the basket. Then go for a policeman and have him taken away."

"It seem mouty homelike an' nateral to be havin' a baby aroun'," preparing reluctantly to obey.

"I dare say, when it 's asleep."

"An' la, Miss Patty, jest look at dem eyes!" The baby had waked up, and with a pair of large brown eyes was gazing curiously and without fear into the cook's face. "His mother, what de letter say is a angel in heaven, ain't got no mo' beautifuller eyes dan dem, I know. Jest look," holding the boy for inspection under Miss Pritchard's nose.

"Come, Afra, no more fooling. The best thing to be done for the child is to get him into comfortable quarters for the night. I will go to the asylum myself, and see what can be done," said the old lady, her face clearing as a bright thought suggested that she might, after all, be of use to the little creature thus unfairly thrust upon her notice. "You go for the police, and I will get my bonnet and cloak."

Afra, who was trying to get the child back in his basket, found, like those who call spirits from the deep, that it was not so easy to make him down again. He began to bawl and kick, wisely preferring liberty and love to being cribbed in solitary confinement in a market basket.

"My! my! This will never do, Afra. You ought not to have taken him up. What *will* your master say?"

"Master mouty apt to say de wrong thing," muttered Afra, an adept in the art of asides. "I kin hush him up fo' you git yo' bonnet, Miss Patty," she said aloud.

Expeditious as Miss Patty tried to be, she did not

succeed in getting away with the child before her brother made his appearance. He entered the room just as John was exercising his lungs and heels to the utmost.

Mr. Lawrence, or Larry Pritchard as he was commonly called, was a bachelor, beyond the fighting age, rather stout, and quite bald. His round face had aged without maturing, like a wrinkled rosy apple. This gave him the appearance of an elderly boy, and was probably one of the reasons why his boyish name stuck to him. In addition he was exceedingly near-sighted, and put up his glasses now to discover the cause of the unusual noise.

"A baby!" he stammered, looking with puzzled anxiety from Miss Patty's face to Afra's, and from Afra's to his sister's again. "A baby!"

Turning about, he was getting out of the room as fast as possible, when curiosity prompted him to pause at the door. "Where did it come from?" he whispered mysteriously, as if the subject was an improper one, to be spoken of with bated breath.

"Heaven knows," whispered Miss Patty, not to be outdone in propriety. "Afra found him on the front doorstep."

"Better put him where he came from," returned Larry, speaking out boldly, as he washed his hands of the ugly business.

"And let the child freeze to death?" exclaimed his sister with some heat.

"Dar now, pet lam," laughed the cook, mixing her asides with baby talk as skillfully as she mingled tart with sweet in the kitchen. "Mars Larry done said de

wrong thing. I knowed he would. He want you put on de do'step agin. Menfolks ain't got no sense nohow. What dis you got in yo' han', honey?" she continued, purring on as she unclasped the little fingers doubled tightly over a small hard object. "A brass button, as I'm alive! Some fool of a man gin you dat to play wid, I bet. Womenfolks got mo' sense. Ef you had swallered dat, honey, Miss Patty would a had to sen' you to de buryin' groun', a heap sight better place to my min' dan de awful 'sylum."

"What *are* you doing to him, Afra?" asked Miss Patty, the boy screaming louder than ever at having his button taken from him.

"Jest gittin dis thing away," said Afra, giving the button to her mistress, who, with the indifference to small objects common to persons whose sight is not so good as it once was, laid it on a table without further interest.

Larry, being near-sighted and accustomed to eying things at close range, picked it up, and after a moment's examination, "Why, this is an United States army button on a bit of blue cloth!" he exclaimed, in horror-stricken undertones, as if instead of an United States button, an United States regiment had been treasonably smuggled into the house.

"A Yankee button?" cried Miss Patty, turning furiously red and getting out her spectacles again. "Why so it is, and torn from a blue coat!"

"Looks as if he wanted to capture an enemy," said Mr. Larry.

"And did n't want to let go nuther," said Afra.

"Then he's true grit, God bless him!" cried Miss Patty.



Larry began to fidget again. "Get him away, get him away, Patty, as soon as possible," he muttered, as they stood together under a lamp, examining the relic.

Meanwhile, Afra, who had succeeded in comforting the child by giving him a string of colored beads fished out of her pocket, held him up radiant with good humor. A crow of delight recalled attention from the mystery of the button to the contemplation of the human problem. Larry and his sister turned to look at the baby, whose yellow head and laughing eyes, in juxtaposition to the cook's sable hues, shone like a star on the brow of Night. It was so charming a picture that Miss Patty glanced uneasily away and Larry abruptly left the room.

"Miss Patty," said Afra, taking note of this rather unexpected effect, "it's gittin late, an' I spec all dem folks at de awful 'sylum done gone to bed. Dey ain't got nothin' ready for a new baby dis time o' night."

"Neither have I, Afra," going for her bonnet.

"It's mouty cold out do's, an' de 'sylum's long way fum here, an' you had a tech o' rheumatiz' las' week."

"That's true," thoughtfully. "I will order the carriage."

Afra laughed. "La, you done forgot dat dese is Christmus times! De stable do's locked, an' Dannel — he's everywhar cep at home."

Miss Pritchard lost patience. "That's always the way. I suppose all the others are off too?"

"Every blessed one cep me. You know you always gin us holiday a week at Christmus, an' dem niggers *always* begin de night befo'."

"My! my! my!"

"I'll tell you what 't is, Miss Patty. Ef you lemme take car o' dis chile to-night, befo' de Lawd I'll carry him to de 'sylum in de mornin', — ef you say so."

Afra's cumulative arguments were successful. Miss Pritchard compromised.

"Well, get him out of the way before your master comes back," she said hurriedly, "and don't let me hear a sound out of him."

Afra began immediately to carry her part of the agreement into effect. She had not been in the kitchen all these years without learning the importance of striking while the iron is hot.

The baby did not feel under bonds to play the part assigned him. So far from not letting a sound escape him, he cooed like a dove, crowed like a cock, and cried "Mam, mam, mam," in Miss Patty's face, bringing to it a left-handed smile as he was borne from the room.

He was plainly a happy dog, born with a healthy body and a cheerful soul. Materialists contend that they are the same thing.

It will always be a moot point whether it was well for us that our ancestors imported Africans into this country. But Master John for one will always side with our ancestors and thank God for his black friend Afra.

The calls upon Miss Patty's benevolence this memorable Christmas Eve were not yet at an end. She was sitting by the parlor fire, thinking over the recent occurrence, which had left her trembling and agitated, when a timid knock at the door was followed by the entrance of a young woman in shabby mourning, evi-

dently in distress, who made a quaint little bob courtesy by way of salutation.

"Back again, Mrs. Manning?" said the old lady, surprised, for this was a seamstress, an English woman, whom she employed by the day, and who some hours before had put up her work and gone home for the night. "Has anything happened?" with a sigh, for Mrs. Manning was one of the unfortunates to whom something was always happening. Her husband had lost a leg in a railway accident two years before, and she had just buried her only child, a little girl not quite a year old. It seemed to Miss Pritchard that she no sooner helped the young woman out of one difficulty than she was plunged into another.

"Yes, indeed, ma'am, something has happened in the house where we live. One of our fellow-lodgers, a friend of my husband's, has just died, and the poor creature has not left so much as a shilling to buy a coffin with, and indeed it is too decent a body to be buried like a pauper. The landlady wants to get it out of the house as soon as possible, and I have been running about among my employers to beg a little money to have the poor creature buried like a Christian, to-morrow. My husband would do it himself, but you know he is lame, and the streets to-night are so slippery. I have come to ask if you can spare a little, ma'am."

Miss Patty was glad it was no worse. Mrs. Manning's excitement and tears would have led one to suppose that she had been burnt out of house and home. The lady took out her pocket-book. It would be difficult to say how often it had been out that day. Christmas times added to war times doubled the drain

on one's resources. Charity had need to suffer long and be very kind to meet the demand.

"I am sorry it is not more," she said, contributing something to the burial fund.

"I should n't have dared to ask so much, ma'am. Thank you, in the name of the poor body who can never thank you in this world, ma'am," with another and deeper courtesy.

Miss Patty looked at her sharply. She wondered if the woman knew how much her little courtesy, her downcast eyes, and her pronunciation of vowels had done for her. No native American ever made reverences or pronounced *oo* in *poor* after the fashion of this rosy-cheeked little seamstress. They interested Miss Patty so much that she found it difficult to refuse Mrs. Manning anything. Her mind was full of the event which had upturned her own household. Having disposed of the seamstress's request, her thoughts went back to the baby. Mrs. Manning was pinning up her shawl to go when Miss Patty spoke again.

"Strange things are happening round us," she said, gravely. "Death has entered into your home to-night, Mrs. Manning, and a new life has been brought into mine."

Mrs. Manning opened wide her downcast eyes at this surprising announcement.

"Oh, Miss Pritchard, what do you mean?" glancing wonderingly round, vainly searching for indications of something new.

"Why, have n't you seen Afra?"

"No, ma'am, I came through the kitchen as usual, but she was n't there."

"Ah, well. It's too long a story to go over to-night. Come to-morrow and get some of the Christmas pudding."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am. A happy Christmas to you and Mr. Pritchard. Good-night, ma'am."

With another courtesy she was gone. Mrs. Manning, in a hurry to get through her business, was evidently more interested in the Christmas pudding than in the new life, although if she had thought about it, she must have wondered how a new life had been brought about in such an unlikely place as the Pritchard household.

Miss Patty, disappointed at this want of concern regarding a matter in which she was so much interested, following on the heels of her practical sympathy with the seamstress's unburied lodger, closed her empty pocket-book with a snap and went to bed.

### III.

#### HE PULLED OUT A PLUM.

CHRISTMAS came in with the booming of cannon and ringing of bells muffled by a heavy fall of snow in the air. Miss Patty's first waking thought was naturally of the event the day commemorated, the birth of a child in Bethlehem centuries ago. Then she remembered the child who had found shelter under her roof only the night before, and the thought of the one made the strongest appeal for the pitiful case of the other.

"Poor little waif! I am glad after all that he will not spend his Christmas in the almshouse."

Her heart warmed towards the child whose father was in the field, whose mother was in heaven. The words of the note had caught her imagination as well as won her confidence. It did not occur to her to doubt the truth of its statements.

"Surely my hopes for this world are in the field and for the next in heaven," she mused, her eyes filling with tears, although she did not misplace a pin in her careful toilet. "Will the father fight better if his child is well cared for? What would I not give to nerve an arm in battle!" she exclaimed with a gentle burst of patriotism, her heart sending up a prayer for our dear men in the field, which in its breadth and warmth included the father of the boy John.

Miss Pritchard, who was plain and angular from a material point of view, had a heart full of soft, warm places when you got at them. She was plain of speech, too, but always direct and honest. Her hair, which was fast getting white, had been golden in its youth, as could be seen from yellow threads lingering here and there like gleams of sunshine on a wintry afternoon. Her faded blue eyes, beneath which tear channels were deep and dark, were kind and cheery still. What they had lost in heaven's color they had gained in heaven's brightness. She had had her little romance in her day, but it was of such short duration, and over so long ago, that its memory bore to the reality much the same resemblance that a few remaining sticks and stems bear to the nosegay we pressed when we were young. It required the tenderness of a first and only love to reconstruct, even in imagination, the life and perfume of that early bloom.

Christmas day was a busy one with Miss Patty. First of all there was church; then the children of the parish, her poor people, the sick and wounded in the hospitals, her friends and neighbors, had all to be remembered. The snow which whitened and beautified everything was all very well to look at, but it undoubtedly added to the difficulties of the day. It was not nearly so easy to get about as in fine weather. There was not found a moment convenient for sending away the baby, who, so far from spending his Christmas in the almshouse, was in a fair way to be killed with kindness at the Pritchards'. He was passed from one to another of the household as it suited their Christmas comings and goings. The housemaid dan-

dled him and good naturedly allowed him to poke his fingers in her eyes. The coachman held him astride a horse in the stable. The stable-boy gave him a whip. Everybody offered him something to eat, a pernicious practice that might have resulted fatally but for the good fortune which followed the child into the house.

Miss Patty went so far as to call it a special providence, as well as an instance of bread thrown upon the waters returning, that Mrs. Manning, the young Englishwoman she had so often befriended, should now, having just lost her own baby, be able to give the foundling proper nutriment in such unstinted abundance as to make him indifferent to the cake and candy proffered on all sides. The child, at the outset, had stumbled upon a foster-mother. While the father fought in the field, the stars in their courses fought for the boy. He remained in the Pritchards' house several days on sufferance. A few days more and he was "the baby." A little later on, he was "Master Jack," and installed.

Mrs. Manning, no longer seamstress but nurse, changed the name of John to Jack. The servants, because he had come at Christmas-pie time, added the nursery cognomen of Horner. So that in less than a month from the time he was set adrift in a market basket, little Jack Horner had found a local habitation and a name.

One morning, while Miss Patty and her brother sat at breakfast, the sound of a baby's scream coming in with hot muffins when the door was opened prompted Mr. Pritchard to ask:—



"What do you intend to do with that boy, Patty?"

"I don't know yet. If the war continues, make him a soldier, I suppose."

A little convulsive movement of the mouth which sent his right eyebrow up to his hair, intended for a smile, passed over Mr. Pritchard's face, as he asked:—

"Do you expect to live that long?"

"I'll take my chances," she said, good humoredly. "But the war may end sooner than we think, and then his own people can have him."

Larry's eyebrow went up incredulously. "His own people? I don't believe he has any."

"Then he is unlike most Virginians."

"I don't see why we should be saddled with him."

"Neither do I, exactly. But he shan't trouble you, Larry," said Miss Patty, becoming serious. "I have a feeling, somehow, that in taking care of him I am doing something for the cause. What we want is men, and there is so much promise in this little fellow that I don't feel like throwing it away. If his father is killed, the child will take his place,—not to-day, but one of these to-morrows."

"So you believe all that the fellow who left him here chose to write?"

"Yes, I do. I don't know why I should, but I do, all the same, and I believe the father will be a better soldier for my confidence. It is part of my creed," said Miss Patty rising, with a glow on her faded cheek, "that faith and endeavor even in this world never come quite to nothing."

Meanwhile Jack held his own even with Larry. On one occasion when the latter tried to coerce the

child into doing something he did not want to do, Jack rebelled, wept, whimpered, and finally, exhausted by a tempest of emotion, fell asleep while the gentleman on guard waited to be obeyed. Overcome by superior force, Jack failed to conquer, but achieved what, in the language of the day, was second only to success, a masterly retreat. Even Larry hesitated to recall the child from the slumber into which he had escaped.

"The boy wins every time," thought Miss Patty, who, knowing that old bachelors, like old maids, have theories about the education of children, had watched the experiment with amused interest.

Miss Patty, like many another fine woman, had somehow missed in life a woman's greatest happiness. Although the recipient of more than a common share of friendship, she had never, except during a brief romance in youth, been first in anybody's love. Her nature had not been spoiled by this untoward circumstance, but rather sweetened by the patience with which she bore her lonely life. For lonely it was, although passed for the most part in companionship with her brother. In spite of her sincere affection for Larry, he, being solemn and didactic, was something of a trial.

Into this dry, middle-aged existence, little Jack with his brand-new life and glorious possibilities had been unceremoniously thrust. To Miss Patty, it came to be like the bubbling of a pure rill on a thirsty plain. When the first blush of indignation had subsided, it is surprising how many reasons she found for taking charge of the boy. In ordinary times, she argued, she would have accepted the natural inference that the boy's antecedents were undesirable, and scouted the

idea of adopting him. But these were not such times. In ordinary times, nothing like this had happened to her. Nothing was more probable than that many men in the army, of whom she firmly believed Jack's father to be one, had been obliged to leave their families unprovided for, and it was the duty of every loyal man and woman with comfortable homes and means to fill their places as far as possible. It was the only thing non-combatants were good for in the present crisis.

One generous, loving impulse paves the way for a multitude as truly as that a heart swept and garnished for one evil spirit opens the door to many. It would be sad for us if this were not so. Miss Patty, who thought to befriend the boy for charity's sake, soon loved him for his own. She resolved to be father and mother to him until his own people claimed him. The starved side of her nature had found an object for its tenderness.

Her unsatisfied desire to be of use in the world, her unrealized hope of being necessary to somebody's happiness, were born anew. Her old enthusiasms were rekindled when the child would place his tiny hand in hers for guidance, or look up in her face for approval. She felt that here was a new life to be cherished not only for its own sake, but as a citizen of the young republic, scarcely older than himself, and the supreme object of her loyalty. There is no patriotism so devoted as the flame which burns in the heart of a gentle spinster. Witness the high-spirited maiden whose loyalty was so ardent that she kept sacred the sheets in which the majesty of Scotland, that vagabond Prince Charlie, once slept, to serve as her shroud.

"A wife," Miss Patty would say, "has her husband to give to the cause, a mother her sons, and a man may achieve honor, glory, and a soldier's death for his country, but I have only love to offer," and that she gave without stint. This sentiment came in time to be mingled with the affection she gave the boy, who in a manner represented the cause.

Her prayers for one were all the more fervent because of the other. The foundling had won a place in a good warm heart. Little Jack Horner had pulled out his plum.

near the town of Blankburg. When the fact of Jack's advent into the Pritchard household became known to them, it created some consternation and a great deal of talk. After much discussion, it was decided that one of them should go to Richmond to see what kind of animal the little interloper was, and to discover if possible Mr. and Miss Pritchard's intention concerning him. Their choice of an agent for this delicate mission reflected credit on the family astuteness.

Madelaine Key, the eldest daughter of the elder brother, was about twenty-four and what everybody called nice looking. That is, they began by calling her so, and it was a passport to general favor. Men, in the long run, prefer nice-looking women to beautiful ones. They certainly wear better, and women admire them with a delightful absence of rivalry. Nice looking was an entering wedge which disarmed precaution, and unwary eyes would return again and again to Madelaine's face, and end by finding something more.

The first impression was not much beyond that she had a clear, pale complexion, richly fringed gray eyes, and a grave countenance. A lack of brilliance in color and expression masked the charm of her face to superficial observers. It grew upon one little by little, like the unfolding of a delightful secret known only to one's self, and the world left out in the cold.

The morning of her departure for Richmond, she was in the dining-room of her home in the country, bidding the household good-by. In the family group, her individuality was strongly marked by contrast with the others. These were her father and mother, two

brothers in the army, two sisters just grown, and a half-grown brother.

Mr. and Mrs. Key were a sensible-looking pair, a little past middle age, who doubtless had started in life without much resemblance to each other, but by long association had so converged towards a common type, domestic, parental, rural, that it was difficult to imagine that they had ever had a separate existence, or been other than a comfortable country couple with a quiver full of married joys and cares. The sisters, Alice and Kate, were fresh with rustic bloom and buoyant with animal spirits. The only brother at home was Dick, a bright-eyed lad at the gawky age, mostly legs and arms. In this environment, Madelaine's gravity was as noticeable as her tall figure and pale complexion. Another distinction existed in the fact that she was in mourning, her dress being altogether black with the exception of a silken gray veil wound about her hat and throat. The others, in true Confederate fashion, wore motley or colors that came handiest without regard to harmony.

"Be sure and write us all the Richmond war gossip, and don't forget your shawl, Madelaine," said her mother, with a final kiss.

"Which war, the men's or the women's?" asked Mr. Key, getting into his overcoat to drive with Madelaine to the station.

Everybody looked up.

"I thought they were the same," said Mrs. Key.

"What is papa driving at now?" asked Kate, dipping into a satchel to see if Madelaine had everything she could want on the journey.

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"Something very deep, if Kate does not understand," came sarcastically from Dick, who had been snapping all the morning, to hide his discontent at Madelaine's going away.

"Is there a woman's war, papa?" inquired Madelaine.

"Your mother asked for Richmond war gossip, and I hear a war is going on there between Mrs. President and Mrs. Quartermaster-General about their respective styles of beauty, the influence of which — I mean the war, not the beauty — is felt all along our lines," said Mr. Key, who, like most married men, enjoyed a joke on women.

"Their respective styles of beauty?" said Mrs. Key. "Why, I thought they were both brunettes."

"Yes, but Mrs. Quartermaster-General said Mrs. President looked like a squaw, and Mrs. President retorted that the other's hair was 'kinky.'"

Everybody laughed.

"That looks like a war of races," said Mrs. Key. Alice, meanwhile, had slipped into Madelaine's satchel a flask of German cologne, — a treasure which the blockade made of inestimable value, and which Alice had been saving for an occasion. Madelaine would not have permitted it if she had known, so with Kate's connivance the satchel was closed, and the cologne a profound secret until the traveler was too far from home to remonstrate.

"I want to know all about that Pritchard baby, if he is a better-looking chap than I am," said Dick, smoothing his rough hair with one hand and pulling up his shirt collar with the other.

"It would not take much to be that," said Kate, who never allowed Dick to go unwhipped of justice.

"All of us want to know about that Pritchard baby," said Alice.

"I shall send you an inventory of his charms," promised Madelaine.

The journey to Richmond was a slow one. Southern railroads, taxed to their utmost carrying troops, were out of joint in track and rolling-stock.

Traveling by steam was like traveling in an ugly dream, where one is constantly going, and never arriving.

The route lay for the most part through a desolated country, where deserted fields and ruined homesteads bore silent testimony to the nature of war. At every station soldiers got off and on the train, — shabby, ragged, sometimes even shoeless and hatless, but always in fine spirits and ready with the least provocation or with none to break into cheers or uproarious song.

At the last station before reaching Richmond, a young, boyish-looking private, badly wounded in a recent raid into the enemy's lines, was helped into the car by a comrade wearing the chevrons of an officer, who made him as comfortable as might be by reversing a seat and improvising pillows with blankets and shawls.

It was Madelaine's fortune to sit behind these two. The wounded lad's white face and look of patient suffering made her heart ache with unavailing pity. There could be but one end, and it not far off, for the young fellow round whose mouth and eyes the shadows were even now settling. It seemed to her that "Sor-



row's crown of sorrow" was to look on trouble like this, and not be able to succor or even to soothe.

Meanwhile the car was stifling with an overheated stove, closed windows, and a mixed company. A peevish woman, with a sick baby, made a moan every time a breath of air was admitted. The wounded soldier's companion, whose bronzed face bespoke intimate acquaintance with all sorts of weather, was suffering as only men accustomed to sleep beneath the stars can suffer in a close, ill-smelling atmosphere.

The veins in his forehead were swelling, and the discomfort was becoming intolerable, when a fresh, volatile odor vivified the air and enveloped him in its fragrance. He drew in a long breath of enjoyment. The wounded lad's eyes opened with an unmistakable look of pleasure. A hand was extended over the back of the seat, and Madelaine — thinking how repaid her sister would have been had she known her gift would bring a smile to eyes that had looked and loved their last — laid her handkerchief on the invalid's breast.

Fortunately, the journey was now soon at an end. When the train rolled into the station at Richmond and passengers were leaving their seats, the officer turned to thank Madelaine and give back her handkerchief, but his charge clasped the bit of cambric in his wan fingers and would not let it go. Who knows with what dreams of love and home a breath of perfume and a woman's handkerchief gladdened his heart?

The officer looked up in Madelaine's face with "You see how it is with this poor fellow" expressed in his eyes more eloquently than if he had spoken.

Madelaine bowed, and answered with a glance which said, "I understand."

The mute little drama was enacted in a moment. There was no time for more. A clanging bell and the shriek of a steam-whistle scattered the passengers like thistledown. Madelaine saw no more of her fellow travelers. But she did not forget them. She carried away an indelible impression of the young private's ashen face and his companion's speaking blue eyes, to which the contrast of his bronzed skin gave an almost startling brilliance.

The officer, on his part, had only the memory of a perfume and a gracious presence. Madelaine's veil being down, he had seen through its silken meshes but the suave contour of a face and the shimmer of bright eyes that said, "I understand."

## V.

### DIPLOMACY.

To Lord Palmerston has been given the credit of abandoning the Machiavelian system and introducing the practice of telling the truth in diplomatic affairs. Madelaine might have graduated in his school, for her first words after greeting Mr. and Miss Pritchard with a kiss were, "Why, aunt, they tell me that you and Uncle Larry have adopted a baby, and I'm afraid you will love him better than you do me," with a little assumed air of discontent which made Miss Patty laugh.

"Never fear, Madelaine; blood, you know, is thicker than water."

Larry gave one of his chuckles with uplifted eyebrow. "You have been misinformed as to my having anything to do with adopting the boy, Madelaine. I disapprove of him altogether."

"Why? Is n't he a nice child?"

"Nice? He has no manners, and is growing up a little heathen."

"Manners?" said Madelaine, drawing off her gloves; "why, how old is he? I thought he was a baby."

"Not more than fifteen months, I think," said Miss Patty; "and Larry expects him to pray like Stonewall Jackson, and make bows like General Lee."

"Uncle Larry is ambitious for your protégé," said Madelaine, holding her hands to the fire, which gave a rich glow to her complexion, a rosy transparence to her fingers, and sparkled brightly on her rings. Her attitude, as she stood with one foot on the low fender, was full of quiet grace. Her thoughtful face and round, womanly figure were in perfect keeping with her homelike surroundings.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to have you here, Madelaine. It's a comfort to look at you," said Miss Patty.

Even Larry, after a momentary glance, arched both eyebrows and twitched his glasses off his nose with a satisfied "Humph!"

"Can I see the youngster?" asked Madelaine, gathering up her wraps preparatory to going to her room to change her dress.

"Yes, when you come down," said Miss Patty. "Mrs. Manning brings him to the parlor about this time."

When Madelaine returned, Jack was on hand, resplendent in a white frock, and his hair in as many rings as his nurse could make of its fine gold. Larry was putting him through his paces as usual. The child had begun to simulate articulate sounds, and his instructor had brought him so far as to say "Goo gaw" for "Good-morning," with the additional ceremony of shaking hands every time he encountered the gentleman. He might go through the performance nine times a day, and if he omitted it the tenth he was set down as a mannerless baby. Fortunately, "the tear that down the cheek of childhood flows" is an evanescent water

drop, or Jack's life might have become a burden to him. As it was, he seized with avidity the times between instruction to be a merry little soul. He had made his obeisance to Larry, and was being released with an injunction to be a good boy, and not to forget to say his prayers, when Madelaine came back.

"How do you do, Master Jack?" she said. Her voice always arrested attention. Its effect upon Jack was immediate. He gazed at the newcomer as if she were a revelation. A new planet had wheeled into the orbit of his observation. The lady's countenance expressed neither the disapprobation of Uncle Larry, nor Miss Patty's anxiety to please, nor yet the affected hilarity with which strangers often try to ingratiate children.

"Come and shake hands," she said gravely, extending one of hers as to a friend.

Jack, like a soldier at word of command, trotted across the floor, and did as he was bid. Then of his own accord he clasped the lady round the knees, and looked up in her face with beaming eyes.

Something in the action touched a tender chord or recalled a painful association to Madelaine. Her brows contracted, and while she laid a caressing hand on the child's yellow hair she turned her head away that she might not see the little upturned face.

Larry, who had been waiting to see his assertion of Jack's want of manners verified by his refusing to shake hands, was dumfounded. That the foundling should accord to a young woman like Madelaine obedience which he refused to Lawrence Pritchard, a gentleman and the head of the house, showed how far

the world had gone astray, how inadequate was Patty's system of education, and how, as Solomon had said, "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child."

Madelaine, by this time, had recovered her serenity and taken Jack in her lap, where he was put in the seventh heaven of delight by a fragrant kiss, the caress of delicate fingers, and the lullaby of a rich voice recounting to Aunt Patty country gossip and the adventures of the day.

Madelaine had a natural gift for winning children, and her peculiar charm was never more apparent than when simply by the influence of her personality she brought a child in happy subjection to her will.

Miss Patty, on the opposite side of the chimney, knitting the prevalent stocking, — in those days for every pair of feet in the army many pairs of hands at home manufactured covering, — feasted her faded eyes on the home picture glowing in the firelight: Jack, nestling in Madelaine's arms, his white frock and yellow head in high relief against her sombre dress, as he played with her rings and gurgled happiness.

Larry, meanwhile, sat in his armchair out of the circle of firelight, motionless, silent, diffusing an air of spiritual discomfort. Miss Patty glanced anxiously towards him from time to time, as one scans clouds in a stormy quarter. Madelaine tried unsuccessfully once or twice to draw him into conversation.

Finally he stalked out of the room, and the others drew a long breath.

"What's the matter?" asked Madelaine.

"Jack," said her aunt.

"I see. I've taken too much notice of the boy."

Miss Patty nodded.

"I shall have to be more careful in future."

Another nod.

"I'm so glad you call the child Jack," said Madelaine presently; "I like the name. It has a good, honest ring."

"He is indebted to Mrs. Manning for that. I should have preferred Johnny Reb. But there is nothing like being first in the field. The servants dubbed him Jack Horner at sight, and the name has stuck."

"And it is better. Jack Horner suggests Christmas and peace and plenty, — good things for a child. The war will be over before he is a man, and then Johnny Reb will be an anachronism."

"I suppose you are right."

The nurse came and took Jack away.

Madelaine leaned back in her chair, and pensively contemplated the fire. After a while she said, "Now, Aunt Patty, I have told you my news, and you must tell me all about how this little fellow came here."

Miss Patty was delighted to have a new auditor to the oft-repeated story. She laid her knitting in her lap, and poured into Madelaine's attentive ear the facts of the case to the minutest detail. The recital finished, there was silence for some minutes. Madelaine seemed to be thoughtfully reviewing the evidence. Finally she asked with quite judicial gravity, "And what do you make of the Yankee button?"

Miss Patty drew her chair closer. This was a knotty and interesting point. "I have decided," she said earnestly, "that Jack's father captured a Yankee, and gave the child the button as a trophy."

"That seems likely enough," said Madelaine.

It is delightful to have one's theories adopted without argument. Miss Patty resumed her knitting, confirmed in the opinion that there never was so sensible and comforting a creature as her niece.

"And you think the button the most distinctive mark?" resumed Madelaine, shading her eyes from the deep red glow with which the mass of burning coals had fallen.

"That and the letter D, Mrs. Manning found on his underclothes."

"True, I must look at that."

"Dear Madelaine," said Miss Patty, with a yearning expression of affection, "it's so pleasant to have your sympathy about Jack. Larry thinks I have made a fool of myself. Sometimes I think so too, and you know there is no fool like an old fool. I was afraid you would laugh at me. But you seem really interested in the child, and it's a great comfort."

"I *am* interested, and more than that. I am going to try and discover his father."

Miss Patty was not sure that she was pleased with this announcement. She had already begun to be jealous of that mysterious father. Having entered into a contract with herself to keep Jack until the end of the war, she preferred to abide by the agreement.

Meanwhile, Jack was making other conquests. Madelaine was yielding to his fascinations without a struggle, and Larry was obliged to give in when the boy fell asleep.

When Miss Patty spoke again, her thoughts had taken another turn. "I am all the more pleased,



Madelaine," she said hesitatingly, "that you feel kindly towards the child because I fancied my relations might — might" — She did not know exactly how to put her thought into words.

"You fancied," said Madelaine, flushing slightly, "that we might not like the idea of your adopting a strange child, and you were right, aunt. We had quite an indignation meeting when we heard about it. We thought some unscrupulous person had imposed upon your good nature, and," she continued firmly, making a clean breast while she was about it, "we were jealous that some base-born brat, as papa put it, should take the place of your own flesh and blood. That is the way we looked at it in Amherst County."

"But now that you are here, you think differently?"

"N-o," with deliberation, "I can't say I *think* differently, but I *feel* differently."

"Ah!" exclaimed Miss Patty, settling back to her work, and picking up a dropped stitch. She had not lived so long without learning that what a woman feels is of much more importance than what she thinks. "And what do you feel?" she asked.

"I feel that the child gives you a great deal of happiness, and he reminds — Ah, well!" The sentence ended in a sigh.

Miss Patty looked up uneasily. Madelaine was leaning back in her chair with pale, fatigued face and closed eyes.

"You are tired, dear, and no wonder. I ought not to have let you sit up so late after your journey."

"No, I am not tired," opening her eyes, "but there are some things" —

"Yes, I know."

"The dying face of the young man on the car  
me. Then Jack's little hands clasping me round  
knees" —

"I understand, dear child," said Miss Patty, f  
wiping her eyes with the half-finished stocking.  
you look quite worn out. Let me get you a  
wine."

"No, no," said Madelaine, rising, "I shall  
right in the morning. I believe I *am* tired."

## VI.

### ICI ON PARLE BABY-LONISH.

THE next day was Sunday. Madelaine, restored by a night's rest to her calm and cheerful self, made a visit to the nursery before going downstairs.

"If Uncle Larry is such a goose as to be jealous of a baby," she thought, "I might as well get a little pleasure out of the youngster privately."

The pleasure did not prove to be so private, after all. In the large, sunny room which did duty as nursery, she found not only Jack and his nurse, but Afra, who contrived on one pretext or another to get a peep at her protégé every morning while he was being dressed.

The child, after the fashion of old-time royalty, accustomed to receive while his toilet was in progress, welcomed all who chose to assist at that delicate function. The vociferous "goo gaws," and other cheerful sounds which escaped him at sight of his new visitor, indicated that he thought "the more the merrier."

Madelaine, who unconsciously and without appearing to do so took mental notes of human nature as promptly and accurately as if she intended some day to print them, began by kissing the baby and observing the nurse. She had plumbed Jack's depths the night before.

The broad, benevolent Afra was an acquaintance of long standing. Mrs. Manning was a new study. The nursery was properly her domain, and Madelaine liked to be on terms with the governing powers. She often declared that she would not go anywhere, not even to a shop, unless the people were sympathetic. She did not know how it was with others, but as far as she was concerned she could not buy so much as a yard of calico from a person who did not care whether she liked it or not.

Mrs. Manning, she found very English in appearance. A fresh complexion, a low voice, and quiet manner were points in her favor. That she had shifting eyes, and did not look you in the face, Madelaine did not so much like. All this she discovered between two kisses on Jack's dimpled cheek.

The boy, not long out of a bath, glowed with health and glee. His eyes sparkled. His yellow hair, its brightness temporarily dimmed by soap and water, and towzled by vigorous rubbing, stood out from his head in all directions like the sun in a fog.

"Did you drop down out of the sky, you darling?" cried Madelaine, swinging him to her shoulder and looking up in his face, which shone with delight that the gods had sent him such a playmate. "Mrs. Manning, where did he come from?"

Madelaine's enthusiastic apostrophes were not intended as serious questions. But Mrs. Manning was painfully shy. Addressed by name, she turned red and looked at the carpet as she stammered: "Indeed, ma'am, I can't tell. You know it was Afra who found him."

Afra was not shy. She held her fat arms akimbo and showed all her teeth, speaking for herself.

"Yes, 'm, 't was me dat foun' dat boy, an' I 'm a-thinkin' its de bes' day's wuk I ever done."

"If he turns out to be as good as your bread, I think it is, Afra."

The cook beamed at the compliment. "Thanky, Miss Madlin. But you know dat wid de boy as well as de bread, mos' everything 'pends on de raisin'."

Madelaine laughed. "Why, Afra, you are witty as well as wise."

"Dat 's what dey say, 'm," with a polite, elephantine courtesy.

"Wherever he came from, his parents are handsome, I should say," said Madelaine, holding Jack at arm's length, and viewing him critically. She relied on his not understanding, and so not being spoiled by her outspoken admiration. But if he did not understand the words, he knew perfectly well that her manner meant approbation, and he crowed like a Gallic cock with tickled vanity. He stretched out his hands, and tried with all his might to get at the face whose sunbeams warmed his baby heart.

Mrs. Manning's attention seemed wholly absorbed in the drawing-strings of a frock she was getting ready for the child. She said nothing to all this praise of her nursling, but continued with downcast eyes and blushing face to look shy in the presence of the strange lady. Madelaine remembered that Miss Patty had spoken of the nurse as a timid little woman who had seen better days, and had not become accustomed to her position as a servant.

"But for all that," thought Madelaine, "I don't like a down look, and it provokes me for a person to turn red at me. It makes me feel as if I had done something wrong."

The cook's delight at Madelaine's admiration of the foundling was great and undisguised.

"You 's right 'bout de han'some, Miss Madlin. I knowed you 'd be took wid dem eyes. Miss Patty say as how dar ain't no woman could stan' out aginst 'em. For my part, I 'se afeerd dem eyes ain't put in his head for his soul's good, nohow."

"Let us hope for the best," said Madelaine, cheerfully extricating her hair from Jack's predatory fingers.

The two were deep in a conversation of delightful gibberish, which Madelaine seemed to speak like a native and Jack to enjoy to the tips of his fingers and toes, when the door opened, and Miss Patty walked in. Both ladies laughed, and Miss Patty looked a little sheepish.

"So *you 've* come to see the pet lamb and talk baby talk, too," said Madelaine, kissing her aunt good-morning. "We *have* gone back to first principles, have n't we? Who would have thought it of two old fogies like you and me? On the sly, too! I intended my visit to be a profound secret. I should n't be surprised if Uncle Larry came next. There's Afra, now" —

But Afra, who by right should have been in the kitchen looking after breakfast, had vanished on her mistress's appearing.

"I came to bring this," said Miss Patty, holding up with pride and by way of apology a miniature Con-

federate army overcoat she had made for Jack. It was of gray cloth lined with red, and ornamented with army buttons. The old lady had manufactured it with great expenditure of care and eyesight, besides stitching into its fabric as much sentiment as a girl puts, or ought to put, into her wedding gown. Plying her needle and thread during many days, she had combined in thought as well as work her two uppermost interests, fashioning a warm wrapping for the baby, and an uniform, the very sight of which made her flagging pulses beat the quickstep of youth.

"So you are going to make him a Confederate soldier, after all?" said Madelaine. "What a cunning little military affair it is, to be sure!"

"I am glad you like it. Mrs. Manning there does not like gray for a baby. She thinks dark blue would have been prettier."

"Mrs. Manning forgets that the Yankee uniform is dark blue; and we won't wear alien colors on our baby breast, will we Jack?" said Madelaine playfully, returning him to his nurse.

"Mrs. Manning is English, you know," put in Miss Patty, apologetically, "and does not care for either blue or gray uniforms. She is accustomed to red coats for soldiers. Red is her color."

It seemed so indeed, from the hue her cheeks assumed, being thus personally alluded to.

"What an uncomfortable thing to have one always flushing up as if every word you said touched a sore spot or a guilty conscience," thought Madelaine.

Her attention was presently diverted by the door being cautiously opened, and Larry peeping in. "I

said so, Uncle Larry!" she exclaimed, turning on him a bright, triumphant face. "I knew you would come after a while. You were as offish as anything last night, but here you are with the rest of us to pay your respects to Master Jack."

"I came to remind Mrs. Manning," he said, as stiff as you please, "that this is Sunday, and she had better put the child's toys away for the day."

"No matter what brought you," said his niece, resting her hand on his shoulder for a moment, — a caressing movement few persons were tempted to make, and which pleased him accordingly. "Whatever our motives, the fact remains that we are all here, and you must confess that a baby in the house is a magnet of the first power. Is n't it so?"

"Oh, I suppose so," unbending a little, "but they ought not to be made of the first importance."

"Tell it not in Gath, my soul," thought Madelaine, "but Uncle Larry is a prig."

"What a wonderful creature is Madelaine!" thought Miss Patty; "she does more with Larry in a day than I in a month."

"Aunt," said Madelaine, when she and her aunt were alone together, "what kind of a person is Mrs. Manning?"

"Rather a nice, quiet kind of a person, with an unfortunate facility for getting into difficulties. Why do you ask?"

"Because she seems so dreadfully self-conscious, so skittish and shrinking, I imagined she might be a woman with a history."

Miss Patty was silent for a moment. Then, lower-



ing her voice to a confidential tone, "To tell you the truth, the woman has something of a history."

"So?"

"Nothing very thrilling, but enough, perhaps, to account for the manner you speak of. In the first place, you know white servants are at a disadvantage with us. They are not on a plane with their employers nor with their fellow servants, and when one's position is uncertain one's manners are apt to be uncertain too."

"I understand that. And is that all?"

Another pause. "Not quite. Mrs. Manning and her husband, who are English, managed to stir up, as English people are liable to do, some national prejudices in the house where they lodged. You know what firebrands all national questions are just now. The Mannings were supposed to sympathize with the Yankees, and were pretty roughly dealt with. They imagined at one time that their lives were in danger. But I, with some other friends, managed to smoothe the matter over, and get them lodgings elsewhere. The man, who is a cripple, was plucky enough, but the little woman, who was timid before, has ever since had a hunted look, as if the police were after her."

"So that's the reason she looked so red and scared when I spoke of alien colors?"

"I should n't be surprised. The very word alien is a sort of rawhead and bloody-bones to her."

"I see. And you are quite sure that she is all right on our question?"

"Quite."

"Well, if you are satisfied, everybody ought to be. You are the most ardent patriot I know."

“Yes,” said Miss Patty, shaking her little curls like a lion and looking as fierce as a lamb, “and I believe the fact of such a fire-eater as I, taking their part, saved the man — well, at least a coat of tar and feathers.”

## VII.

### MADAME !

IN a letter written home by Madelaine soon after her arrival in Richmond occurred these words concerning Jack : —

“ You know, dear mamma, all of you thought I was the best person to come and see about what Dick calls the Pritchard baby. I thought so myself. It seems to me now I ought to have known I was the last person to be sent on such a mission. But it is easy to be wise after the event. How could any one foresee that the little creature would run and clasp me round the knees at sight? He looked up in my face, and my heart went down before the child like Goliath before the stripling. Then who could have guessed that a chance baby left on a doorstep would turn out to be, not an ugly common bit of humanity, — as we were ready to believe, — but a vision of beauty? I am obliged to confess that he is the handsomest child I have ever seen. You know my weakness for good looks, and what papa calls my facility for liking the wrong person? Well, Jack being handsome and presumably the wrong person, it was a foregone conclusion that I should lose my heart to him. I am almost ready to declare that if Aunt Patty had not adopted him, I should be ready to do so myself but for want of ways and means. I suspect that whoever left

the child at this house knew the inmates were among the very few well-to-do people in town. Not that the pressure of war times is not felt here. Aunt Patty has given up her horses to the army, although they were used chiefly in the service of the sick and wounded. She has the plainest fare and only two meals a day, in order to give more food to the hungry. Little Jack is such a delight to her in these sad times that, in spite of all my fine resolutions, I have not the heart to discourage her about keeping him. She says it will only be until the end of the war. Who knows where any of us will be then? For my part, I do not grudge anything she may do for the boy, and if you could see him, neither would you. Meanwhile, I am curious to know where he came from, and will find out if I can." . . .

The verdict of the Key family on the sense of this letter, as voiced by Dick, was that "Madelaine had gone clean over to the enemy."

Weeks rolled by, and Madelaine, having more than once gone off on what turned out to be a false scent, became discouraged, and began to lose her vigilance in the solution of Jack's mystery.

The winter was far advanced, when she was persuaded one evening to accompany her uncle Larry to a reception given by a prominent member of the Cabinet.

Gayety is never so gay, and religion never so fervid, as in a besieged city. Soldiers, most dashing in the field, carry a like ardor into their pleasures or their prayers, as the case may be. Women, most devoted to the care of the wounded, encourage with brightest smiles men seeking an opportunity to lay down their lives for a cause. A song or a dance to-night, a battle in the

morning; dirge and jubilate ever alternating as in ordinary life, but at accelerated speed like pulses quickened by fever.

The secretary's reception, given on the evening of Shrove Tuesday, and the last of the season, was a brilliant affair, although, excepting the guests, it could not boast a single element of what ordinarily gives that character to an entertainment. Substitute, a word especially applied to men in the ranks, did duty in the Confederacy for food, attire, and all the comforts of life. Scarcely anything was what it pretended to be. A cup of coffee, offered with all the politeness in the world, was really an infusion of toasted sweet potatoes, and it would be difficult at this late day to explain the mysteries of a glass of wine. Make-believe was required on a grander scale than ever taxed the Marchioness's powers of imagination. A banquet was much after the fashion of children's parties, where hawberries pass for fruit, and acorn cups of dew for beakers of champagne. It was the same with dress. Old chests were ransacked for the discarded finery of better days, as children overhaul the treasures of a garret on a holiday. Fashionable costume had its pathetic as well as its humorous side. To a well-dressed foreigner who succeeded in running the blockade, a Confederate ball-room might well have provoked a smile. There, venerable shreds of velvet and brocade mingled on equal terms with toilets of curtain muslin and printed cotton. There, the happy possessor of skirts enormously inflated by crinoline trod the same measure with limp draperies, and ornaments of every date since the days of Pocahontas were thrown in haphazard



To one looking deeper than the surface, this decking the revels of to-day with the worn habiliments of a dead past was more sad than amusing. That the gala garments of the women of the Revolution should reappear, as they often did, to welcome heroes from battle-fields where the great work of the Revolution was being undone, was full of grave suggestion. But the young people thought only of the present, and enjoyed themselves as much as if their dresses had been new, and their champagne the juice of the grape. It is a question if pleasures are not enhanced in proportion to their draught upon the imagination. At any rate, life was new, and their spirits better than wine.

The entertainment on this occasion was a noteworthy assembly of distinguished persons from all parts of the South. Richmond being a social as well as a military and political centre, what there was of genius not in the army was in the capital. The secretary's rooms were filled with representatives of what was best in the country. Pretty women, clever men, gallant soldiers, a sprinkling of foreigners, one penniless prince, one beblanketed Indian, several cabinet ministers, and the President were there. It was at the solicitation of Miss Patty, who thought the occasion an opportunity not to be lost, that Madelaine Key was present, avowedly as an observer rather than a participator in its pleasures. Madelaine, who was in mourning, believed that pleasure was at an end as far as she was concerned. But she enjoyed herself more than she knew. Her intelligence at least was fully alive to the situation, which included much that was interesting to a looker-on.

Early in the evening, she found herself the centre of a group of girls making merry over an enterprise they had on foot. Her black dress and grave countenance were strongly accentuated by their gay attire and laughing faces. More than one pair of eyes singled her out as a nice-looking person and a stranger.

"The lady in black by the mantel-piece, who did you say she was?" asked a ruddy, white-whiskered man, quite by chance as it were, lest he might be considered too old for that kind of thing.

The question was greeted with laughter. The knot of men to whom it was addressed happened, by a not infrequent coincidence, to be looking in the same direction and thinking the same thing, but nobody had spoken.

"We have not said," bluntly responded the readiest speaker, who strange to say was an Englishman, and yet not so strange, seeing that he was also a newspaper war correspondent, — a tall, stiff-backed Briton who, in pursuance of his profession, was a looker-on at Confederate feasts or fights, as they occurred. Now that the Army of Northern Virginia was in winter-quarters, he occupied himself with the study of the social aspect of things. He went everywhere, and always had plenty to say.

"We have not said, only because we do not know," politely interposed a festive little Frenchman with a glass in his eye, a flower in his button-hole, and hair and beard in trimmest perfection, who likewise went everywhere, not as the Englishman for business, but for pleasure. He was an immense favorite in society, his courtesy being in inverse proportion to his size,

which was diminutive. "I should like to know who she is, I am sure," he added, using his English with the careful deliberation of a well-bred foreigner, which gave distinction to everything he said.

A young man, in the uniform of an artillery officer, with his arm in a sling, darkly sunburnt face and clear blue eyes, looked, and said nothing.

He found the lady not only nice looking, but something about her touched a chord of memory.

"Had he seen her before, or was it that she reminded him of some one he knew?" His puzzled face was an open book.

"Major Dallas will find out for us," said the white-whiskered speaker.

The young officer laughed with good-humored embarrassment. The blood for a moment showed red beneath his swarthy skin.

"I am trying to remember if I have ever seen the lady," he said, averting his eyes with a sudden conviction that he had been staring. Clearly, one of his interesting points was an expressive countenance, and its expressions were those of frank, unassuming manliness. Indeed, Major Dallas was a marked man in everybody's eyes but his own. He was one of Jackson's men, and Jackson, who stamped armies with his genius, once in a while left his impress on individuals susceptible to his influence. Hugh Dallas was one of these. He had more than once been conspicuous for gallantry on the field, and as often been recommended for promotion. Like Jackson he was a brilliant and tireless fighter, but outside his profession he had made no especial mark. He had none of the talent for society



which, like the plumes on a helmet, adorns most warriors. Dallas was a man's man. An untoward circumstance had given his mind a bias against women, which up to this time had not been set straight.

"I think madame is a stranger. I have not met her in society before," said the little Frenchman.

"Madame?" exclaimed Dallas, with interrogation points in both eyes.

"Ah, I see," said the other with a pleasant laugh. "I called her madame. You would like her to be mademoiselle? Well — *peut-être*," with an airy shrug of the shoulders.

"Here comes Ellis. He knows everybody. We will ask him," said the war correspondent, seeing a gentleman steering his way towards them through the crowd.

"Know her?" said the newcomer. "Bless my soul! I've known her since she was a baby. Now is n't she nice looking? Her name is Key, daughter of my friend Lawrence Key, of Amherst, my county, you know."

Dallas glanced at the Frenchman, as much as to say, "You see you were wrong about the madame."

The latter smiled and shrugged his shoulders again.

"Character in her face. Looks as if she were all there," said the war correspondent.

He of the white whiskers was about to say something more, when the blare of a military band in the hall playing "Dixie" put an end to intelligible conversation, and the company began to move about.

Meanwhile, Madelaine, whose companions had for the most part scattered, was left alone on a sofa with

Miss Disney, a pretty girl, who, dressed in her great-grandmother's wedding gown, was reanimating the long-buried garment with vivacious spirits as she pointed out to Madelaine the lions of the evening.

Miss Disney, who had the uncommon name of Boadicea, reduced among her friends to Bo, presently became aware of the group whose attention was directed towards the sofa, and her eye at once singled out Major Dallas as the newest and most imposing figure. The others were acquaintances of a season's standing.

Madelaine, unconscious of the glances she attracted, was carrying out her rôle of observer by studying the appearance of a young man who, she had been told, was the champion chess-player of the world.

"So that is Paul Morphy, the man who plays a dozen games at once, and wins them all," she said, trying to appreciate the wonders of the performance, without feeling much interest in his bloodless victories.

"Yes, but that is all he *can* do. He has n't a word to say. He would put you to sleep in five minutes. We girls call him Paul Morphia," said Bo, more interested in a hero who had won his spurs on a broader field than a chessboard. "Don't waste any more time on a mere chessman. There goes a real one, Major Dallas."

"Where?" asked Madelaine, with an accession of interest. The "noble art of murdering" possesses peculiar fascination for women, and Major Dallas's name was in everybody's mouth. "I see a dozen majors," looking in every direction but the right one.

"Yes, but I don't mean those spick-and-span ones

dancing round the President. Don't you see over there an officer with his arm in a sling, and out of whose uniform wind and weather have taken as much color as they have put into his complexion?"

"Is that Major Dallas?" asked Madelaine in deep-toned astonishment, her face brightening with a flash of recognition as her glance fell on the person who, with the wounded lad, had occupied seats in front of her in the railway car. There was no mistaking the fine square head, the vigorous waves of brown hair, the broad shoulders in faded gray uniform, which she had had an opportunity of studying at close range some weeks before. As the major turned, a sight of his bronzed face and keen blue eyes dispelled any doubt she may have had.

"*He* will not know *me*," she thought, remembering that, besides being seated behind him, she had worn a veil on the occasion.

"Have you met Major Dallas before?" asked Bo, catching the note of recognition in Madelaine's voice.

"I have seen him once before, but quite accidentally, without knowing who he was."

"He is a man to know!" said Bo enthusiastically. "General Lee, in his report of Fredericksburg, called him 'the gallant Major Dallas,' and Stonewall, at Sharpsburg, said an army ought to have a Dallas on each flank. Think of that!"

"Ah!" breathed Madelaine, with full-throated admiration.

Her friend Bo was a bright creature, whose sparkling prettiness was so set off by her old-fashioned gown as to suggest a jewel in antique setting. Mr. Pritchard,

by way of keeping an eye on his niece during the evening, in reality kept both eyes on Bo. His glasses, ordinarily used for a momentary glance, he forgot to take off except to wipe them in order to get a clearer view of her face.

Larry, in spite of many things which seemed to point to an opposite conclusion, had a keen appreciation of feminine beauty. There could scarcely exist a greater difference in personal appearance than that between his niece and Boadicea, — a difference so marked that their points of resemblance heightened their individuality. Both, for instance, had luminous eyes; but Bo's, like windows lit by the setting sun, reflected their evanescent brightness from without, while Madelaine's, like windows glowing with the radiance of home and fireside, shone with a steady light from within. Then Bo's slim figure, clear girlish tones, and arch face tinted with the delicate hues of spring were to Madelaine's harmonious development, rich voice, and soft complexion, as early blossom to perfect fruit. In the nature of things, these two did not remain together long.

Boadicea, an acknowledged belle, was swept away by one or more admirers into the stream of gayety that circled round Prince P. who was not only, nor chiefly, a prince, but a good fellow and ardent soldier.

When the music was at its noisiest, Mr. Ellis, who claimed to have known Madelaine from babyhood, presented to her "his friend Major Dallas."

Luckily, they had learned each other's names in advance. It was impossible to make one's self heard with the fanfare of "Dixie" going on behind them.

The actors in the dumb show could only bow and smile, Dallas not a little impatiently. Now that he was near Madelaine, the indefinable something which had struck him as a reminiscence was more apparent than ever. He was anxious to get at the bottom of the mystery.

That Madelaine was nice looking had much, but the indefinable something had more, to do with his desire for an introduction. He was notoriously not a society nor a lady's man. This was the first time a ball-room had ever possessed an atom of interest for him, and he followed it up with the zeal he carried into all his pursuits.

Madelaine made the initial step easy. In the first pause of the music she said, "We have met before, Major Dallas."

"It seems so, indeed," eagerly, "and yet I don't understand how I can have forgotten when and where."

"A lady's veil often puts one at a disadvantage."

"Ah, you were veiled on the occasion? That partly accounts. But I hoped when I heard you speak, your voice would give me the clue. I rarely forget a voice, but yours does not recall our meeting."

"I did not speak," smiling at his puzzled face.

He shook his head in hopeless mystification.

"You remember," she said, "the day in the cars when you were bringing to Richmond a young man who had been badly wounded?"

"And you are *that* lady?" perplexity clearing from his brow like mists at sunrise. "How stupid of me not to have known! I can't tell you how I have looked forward to meeting you again," he said so warmly that Madelaine glanced round to be sure that

he was not observed. "I wanted to thank you for your kindness that day."

"What became of your companion?" asked Madelaine gently.

A shadow fell across the major's eyes. "Young Fairfax? Poor fellow, he died the next day."

"I was so sorry I did not ask what hospital you were taking him to. My aunt, Miss Pritchard, and I looked everywhere for him next morning, and were told that no such person had been brought in."

"That is true. A kinsman of Fairfax's, who happened to be at the station, insisted on taking him to his house, and the poor boy died among his own people."

"That must have been a comfort," sighed Madelaine, remembering how the youth's face had brightened at her trifling attention.

Dallas was thinking of the same thing.

"You know I have your handkerchief still," he said. "I knew I should meet you some day to give it back to you, and tell you that Fairfax clung to it until he died; and for myself, until my own dying day, the odor of cologne will remind me of you and of him."

Madelaine's eyes filled.

"I am so glad to know I gave you and the dear boy a moment's gratification, and I did so little, after all. But pray, don't trouble yourself about the handkerchief. It has no value except that it served to refresh you both."

"But I should like to give it back to you. If I, too, get my quietus," with a half smile, not to appear too grave on the occasion, "it may help to keep the memory of Fairfax and myself green in your thoughts."

"Men like Fairfax and yourself need nothing to keep your laurels or your memory green, Major Dallas," said Madelaine, touched to enthusiasm by the war spirit that burned in every heart, and only needed a breath to fan it into flame. The presence of a man like Dallas, who had won distinction on many fields, and whose appearance corresponded with his reputation of a successful and well-seasoned soldier, was as inspiring as reveille.

Madelaine, like the rest of the world, was only too glad to crown him with laurels, and strew roses, the more the better, in his path. To her, he was the representative of an idea, while she to him was a delightful reality. What at a distance he had found nice looking, within the radius of her personal influence became every moment more attractive. Her earnest manner, and the ring of suppressed enthusiasm in her voice as she said, "Men like Fairfax and yourself," were subtlest incense to the soldier. His spirits rose as when, on the battlefield, his general rang out, "Well done, major!"

One does not always say one's best on occasions. The chances are that one does not. Dallas could think of nothing more original than, "You are very good, I'm sure." But glance and tone filled out the measure of his meaning.

Madelaine thought she had never seen so manly a face so transparent in expression, — a peculiarity which was as distinct an addition to his words as are fine illustrations to text. To look yes when one says yes lends grace even to affirmation. The major, with prominent brow and the massive jaw of the born

fighter, would have been plain but for this speaking quality of countenance. It reminded Madelaine of what she had read of Garrick, whose eyes were said to have been more eloquent than a brace of tongues.

"I am sorry to see you have been wounded since we met," glancing at his arm.

"Yes, in a futile skirmish near Fredericksburg. It's a great bore. Luckily for me there has been no fighting lately. I suppose we shall be at it again soon, and then I hope to be well. Just now, my arm and army affairs keep me here. I am combining business, not with pleasure exactly, but — with pain," he added, as a twinge in his arm made itself felt.

Madelaine was beginning to be interested in her new acquaintance, apart from his character of hero, when the bevy of girls, Miss Disney included, who had dispersed from her vicinity earlier in the evening, came flocking back, bringing their young men with them. Whatever may have been the reason for this unexpected return, the result was that Major Dallas was introduced all around, and there was an end to his quiet talk with Madelaine. They were separated before she had given him her address for the return of the handkerchief.

Larry, who in the mean time had made a circuit of the rooms and spoken to all the youngest and prettiest girls, asking each how many beaux she had and why she did not make haste and get married, his formula for being chatty and agreeable at a party, was tired and wanted to go home.

"Certainly, Uncle Larry," said Madelaine, when approached on the subject. "We have seen the lions



and great folk, and now we will go home and tell Aunt Patty all about it."

It was difficult to resist such cordial acquiescence. Larry was moved to say to his niece, who was helping his near-sighted eyes to find his hat, "You are all sorts of a woman, Madelaine."

When Dallas had succeeded in politely extricating himself from the group of young persons who surrounded and mercilessly lionized him, he found to his regret that Madelaine had disappeared.

She was muffling herself in cloak and hood in the ladies' dressing-room, when a brilliant figure on tiptoe appeared in the doorway. It was Bo, with laughing eyes, her finger on her lips, looking first over one shoulder and then the other to be sure that nobody was within earshot.

"Madelaine," she whispered, convulsed with laughter, — "Madelaine, *what* do you think?"

Her mirth was contagious.

"I don't know what to think," said Madelaine, laughing too.

"Your Uncle Larry — Oh, dear!"

"Has Uncle Larry been amusing?" greatly surprised.

"Yes! Would you have believed it? Oh, dear!"

"Now, Bo, don't keep me in suspense. I left Uncle Larry in the hall getting into his overcoat in a perfectly serious frame of mind."

"That may be, but as I was coming up to get my things, I met him at the foot of the stairs where they turn off in that dark corner. Nobody was near, and *what* do you think he did?"

"Run away?"

"No, no! He caught my hands and squeezed them. Oh, my!"

The girl's eyes and mouth were radiant with fun, her white shoulders shaking with laughter.

"Bo," said Madelaine sternly, although the corners of her lips quivered, — "Bo, I don't believe you."

"Honest Indian, Madelaine. I was as much surprised as you are. If a saint had risen out of the grave, or a fish out of the sea, and squeezed my hands, I could n't have been more astonished."

"Bo," said Madelaine, gathering up her skirts to depart, and gravely regarding the beautiful girl, "I don't know what to make of Uncle Larry. I suppose you took the old gentleman's breath away. You know you have the kind of face to bewilder a man."

"I suppose so," said Bo simply, winding a filmy old lace scarf about her head and throat, which made her look like a rose caught in a cobweb and more bewitching than ever. "Men are certainly very silly. But I can't wear a mask, and I forewarn you," laughing, "that I am not trying to entrap your uncle. You know the women always abuse me when their men come to grief."

"I can believe that yours is a case of involuntary attraction. Besides, I think you have other views than for Uncle Larry."

"Don't be too sure of that," with heightened color, but still laughing. "These are hard times, and your uncle might do for Auld Robin Gray."

"You are too saucy. Good-night."

It was getting late. Hugh Dallas was taking a sand-

wich and a glass of wine in the supper-room, now deserted except for a few men similarly engaged. Among these, he stumbled upon the party with whom he began the evening.

"So you were introduced to the lady, Dallas?" said the elderly man with white whiskers, taking up the subject where it had been dropped.

"Yes, thanks to Mr. Ellis," said Hugh, who had his wits about him now, and could talk society talk with the best of them, "to whom I owe my acknowledgments."

"No need of that, major," said Ellis, busy with supper. "It was a mutual pleasure, I'll be bound. You found her all you anticipated, I hope."

"Yes, and more. I found it was not the first time I had seen her. That was what puzzled me."

"Come," said the war correspondent, who, having swept aside the ends of a ferocious mustache as if he meant business, was indulging an heroic appetite with unlimited sandwiches, "it's not worth while making excuses. As our French friend honestly confessed, we were all interested. Only this sly fellow," indicating the elderly person, "wanted to find out who the lady was without appearing to do so."

"You and your French friend," retorted the elderly person, "play to society the part of chorus to Greek tragedy, that of understanding and explaining everything."

"There, Albion, see what you have brought upon me, who have not offended," said the little Frenchman in his charmingly precise way, sipping a glass of what in the Confederacy passed for wine, but in which

he could not discover even a trace of the traditional "veritas."

"By the bye," said Dallas, turning to Ellis, "Miss Key tells me your place adjoins her father's in Amherst."

"That's true. Did n't I mention it? That's the reason we know each other so well. But you make one mistake, the lady is not Miss but Mrs. Key."

"Aha-a-a!" murmured the little Frenchman, putting down his glass, and rubbing his delicate palms softly together. "Aha-a-a!"

Dallas, whose heart gave a great thump at the information, could have throttled him. He wondered if the confounded glass the fellow held screwed in his eye had enabled him to see better than another. But having had a taste of the company's chaff he held himself in hand. "Indeed?" he said, carefully flicking a crumb from his coat. "That brass band made such a noise I could only guess what you were saying when you introduced me. I understood you to say her father's name was Key, and" —

"The most natural mistake in the world, my dear fellow," interrupted Ellis. "She is constantly taken for Miss Key, living at home with her father, and so young and pretty, too. The fact is, they would all like to forget that she is not Miss Key. Her marriage, the most unfortunate" —

"So she is madame?" laughed the war correspondent, "and our French friend was right after all! That is a good joke. You see," to the elderly person, "you spoke truly, the chorus understands and explains everything."

Dallas asked a passing servant for a glass of water. All his talk made him thirsty, or something, he could not quite tell what. It was like when a boy he was told for the first time that Santa Claus was not a real person.

"Is the lady's husband here to-night?" asked the elderly man, who had a thirst for miscellaneous information and was not to be deterred by chaff from the pursuit of knowledge.

"Her husband here to-night?" echoed Ellis. "Heaven forbid! he has been dead three years."

"Aha, she is a widow! Then all is not lost," said the Frenchman, whose keen smile gave point but never poison to what he said.

Dallas looked conspicuously unconcerned.

The elderly person, by dint of perseverance, got the rest of the story.

"Yes," said Ellis, "she married a man of the same name,—a first cousin, a double first, in fact. The family did everything in the world to prevent it, but it was a desperate love affair, which began when they were children. She was eighteen and he about twenty-five when they were married, some five years ago. I saw the whole affair from beginning to end. Luckily, he lived only two years."

"Was he so bad as that?"

"Yes, utterly good for nothing. But he was an outrageously handsome fellow. No one man has a right to so much beauty. The women, of course, turned his head completely, and at the age of twenty Minor Key put his feet on an inclined plane, and went straight to the dogs as fast as dissipation could carry him."

"And that was the end of Love's young dream, the lady disillusioned, I suppose," said the war correspondent, topping off with a draught of punch made of the real thing, whiskey being a vintage that is never allowed to fail.

"Not a bit of it. She never understood what a scamp he was, and has never ceased to mourn for him. He took himself off just in time for his reputation as far as she was concerned, and died in the sanctity of youth and good looks."

"I suppose," said the Frenchman, who, having an internal and fairly victorious struggle with *th* whenever it occurred, spoke slowly, "that it is one of the compensations of humanity that what you call the scamps have the best time in *this* world."

"Now none of your French immorality, Gaul," said Albion, winding up his repast by dry-rubbing his mustache with his napkin.

"It is late," said the elderly person, who cared more for facts than for moral reflections, "and I must say good-night."

"Good-night," returned the little Frenchman, glass in eye, crush hat under his arm, and tiny patent leather pumps in line, as he bowed from his waist, "and I must thank you for my part of the compliment to the Greek chorus, also for your getting out all the facts concerning the charming widow."

The elderly person laughed a little foolishly, and, muttering something about the alliance between English and French being Gaul and wormwood, took himself off.

The party separated.

Hugh Dallas, who had suffered one mental shock on learning that his interesting acquaintance was married, experienced another on being informed that she was a widow.

It was like being plunged first in hot water and then in cold. He did not know which he liked least.

## VIII.

### A STUDY IN GRAY.

LENT came early in 1863. The day after the reception, which took place about the middle of February, was Ash Wednesday. Madelaine began the penitential season with good resolutions and by going to church at dawn. Before she was out of bed, and while she was dressing, she heard the solemn, continuous tramp of feet and hoofs ~~that~~ was one of the features of the time. Troops were constantly on the move. It seemed to her that at whatever hour of the night she woke there was this tread of a voiceless, never ending army which followed into her dreams, so that sleeping or waking she was conscious of the presence of war.

When she let herself out of the house she saw defiling through the street an host of armed men. The gray of a winter dawn, hanging like a veil over the town, converged in a moving mass of gray coats marching on and on from a dull horizon in the west towards the sun coming slowly from a bank of clouds in the east.

"Dear fellows! How many of you will pass through Richmond again?" she thought, her eyes filling with tears. A gleam of sunshine caught the oncoming bayonets, which, flashing brightly, seemed to rebuke her sad question.



"Yes," she said, furtively wiping her eyes, "no tears; a woman's first duty is to be cheerful."

She stood on the topmost of the house-door steps and smiled a brave, gay smile. She even fluttered a corner of her handkerchief. In a moment, five hundred — well, she never knew how many — caps were raised. The whole division, or at least that portion of it under her eyes, smiled back with as quick and bright reflection as the gleaming bayonets gave the sun. Officers and men must all have been looking her way. Indeed, a Confederate soldier never failed to give a lady the tribute of a glance.

Doubtless they went on their way to fight, and she hers to pray, the better for an interchange of smiles.

The large, low room, dim with the half light of a partly subterranean chamber where early service was held, was filled with worshipers. Men, and above all, women, pray well when their loved ones stand every hour in jeopardy of battle, murder, and sudden death. Gray coats were again a feature of the scene. They bore a fair proportion to the homespun dresses of the women, and stentorian voices swelled the chorus of full-hearted améns. Chief among the gray coats, with a fine, soldierly gray head to match, and a distinguished presence ennobled by simplicity of bearing, was the General of the armies. His erect, imperturbable figure and serene countenance gave courage to many a drooping spirit.

Mrs. Key, her widow's veil thrown from off her face and wound about her ears and chin, sat far back in the chapel, but not so far that there was not some one behind her. When the Venite began, she was startled by

the sound over her shoulder of a bass voice, rich, strong, and true.

"O come, let us sing unto the Lord;  
Let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation,"

rolled forth in tones worthy the anthem. She loosened her veil in order to free her ears. It seemed a shame to muffle the sound of praise like that with crape. The voice was not only militant but triumphant, like a *Te Deum* after victory. It stirred Madelaine's soul. Everything during the war seemed to have peculiar significance for the time. The old *Venite*, like all immortal utterances, was fresh and apposite to-day as in the beginning when David strung his harp and praised God for deliverance from his enemies. The singer behind Madelaine seemed to realize the strong salvation of which he sang. Salvation to every Confederate heart included victory over temporal as well as spiritual enemies, with a pressing sense of the former. Mrs. Key felt encouraged and refreshed as patriot and Christian.

When service was over, the General of the armies rose from his knees with military promptness, and went home to his frugal morning meal without tarrying to talk. The congregation, knowing his habit, made an aisle through which he passed, returning with grave courtesy the salutations from lip and eye that met him on every side. Madelaine's first look had been towards him, and when she turned to see the owner of the fine voice he had disappeared.

She was nearing home when some one at her shoulder bade her a cheerful "Good-morning."

Turning, she saw Dallas, who had not been so fortunate as the General in getting away from the church door without conversation. He was looking bright and smiling, notwithstanding the conflicting emotions of the night before.

Feelings in times of high pressure, like flowers forced in artificial temperature, are of quick birth, but they yield readily to new impressions. A soldier's dreamless sleep had adjusted Dallas's mind to the fact that his new acquaintance was a widow.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Key, but you see I know you, this time."

"That was very clever of you, if you recognized the back of my bonnet," with an amused smile at his face glowing with haste in overtaking her.

"The back of your bonnet, indeed!"

Had he not caught a glimpse of her nice profile and pretty pink ear in church? Had he not since been watching her floating black draperies as one watches the flight of a bird? "No, but you forgot last night to tell me where you lived, and if you will allow me I shall walk home with you and find out for myself."

Madelaine was a little annoyed. She liked a man very well "in his place," and this one interested her more than most, but his place was not beside a widow who is a widow indeed, on her way home from prayers early in the morning. It is a woman's place, however, to yield pleasantly to the inevitable, so she accepted the proffered escort with a smile, asking,—

"Did you stay late at the reception last night?"

"No, it got to be dull after you left. That is, I got tired. A party tires me more than ditching."

"How is it that you are out so early this morning, then?"

"Don't put it down to my credit, please. Nothing like the army for knocking late rising out of a fellow. I can't sleep after cock-crow. This morning, while I was dressing, I heard my sister and her children moving about at what was an unearthly hour for them, and presently a mob of boys and girls hurled themselves at my door, calling at the top of their voices, 'Uncle Hugh! Uncle Hugh! mamma says this is Ash Wednesday, and you must come down and go to church.' I could n't resist all that moral suasion."

"I don't see why you should want to."

"I never shall again. Virtue has its rewards."

"Speaking of rewards," said Madelaine, ignoring the compliment, "I was rewarded by a seat near a fine voice. Somebody chanted gloriously." Suddenly it came to her that Dallas was the somebody. "Oh, was it you?" she asked, coloring.

Dallas laughed.

"It is clear you do not find early rising a penance as most of us do," said Madelaine.

"Penance? This looks like indulgence," adjusting his army swagger to her fine feminine step.

After a pause, he renewed the topic of the previous evening.

"You will permit me to come some day and bring your handkerchief?"

"You have anticipated me. I was about to ask you to come. We are at home on Thursdays, and my aunt, Miss Pritchard, is never so happy as when making a soldier welcome."

"Miss Pritchard? Surely I know that name. Why, she is the lady our sick and wounded fellows call the angel of the hospitals!"

"Yes, we have heard of that. My aunt thinks it is because she preaches good little sermons to them about their souls, but I believe it is because she takes them good dinners, and warm flannels for their bodies."

"I dare say you are both right. Man is a mixed quantity."

"So he is, very mixed. I shall tell my aunt what you say, and reconcile our opinions on that basis."

"I am in luck, having a prospect of making Miss Pritchard's acquaintance. Decidedly, Ash Wednesday is a feast day for me," Dallas was saying with a broad smile, when his companion stopped at her aunt's door.

Madelaine, looking up to tell him that here was her home, saw the smile fade from his lips. He became suddenly grave.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Key," he said, in a changed tone, "but do you live here?"

"Yes, at present, I am staying here with my uncle and aunt. Are you acquainted with the place?" a little curiously.

"No, oh, no, except the outside. I have passed it very often of course, but I never knew who lived here until now. Do you — Are you?" —

"Yes?" said Madelaine, puzzled.

"Excuse me, but the world is a very small place, after all."

"Yes," said Madelaine again.

## IX.

### IN THE BULRUSHES.

THE next day being Thursday, Dallas availed of Mrs. Key's invitation.

He called at Miss Pritchard's early in the forenoon with the hope of preceding other visitors. He had reasons for wishing to visit the house. Among others, he wanted to return the handkerchief, he had a desire to make Miss Pritchard's acquaintance, and he acknowledged to himself that he had a fancy for seeing Mrs. Key again. He was disappointed of his hope of being first in the field. Two elderly maiden ladies, neighbors of Miss Pritchard's, and Miss Disney were in the parlor when he entered.

The room, in smiling contrast to the raw, cold day, was ruddy with an open fire. A delicate appetizing odor from a steaming bowl in the adjoining room added another sense of comfort. Miss Pritchard and her spinster friends, twin sisters by the name of Matchet, gray, gaunt, and exactly alike in appearance and dress, sat by the fire, straight and animated as the knitting needles they clicked in unison, work for soldiers being *en regle* everywhere except in church. Madeline in her best black gown was helping Bo to a plate of genuine New Orleans gumbo, one of the favorite delicacies of the war period.

"Major Dallas!" exclaimed Miss Patty, sunning all over, while the twins fluttered sympathetic delight, as Madelaine presented her new acquaintance. A Confederate officer, arm in sling, could at any time walk into their affections. "Major Dallas, how good of you to come."

"Rather, how good of you to let me come," he answered warmly. "If you knew" —

"I do know all about it," interrupted Miss Patty, shy of being complimented.

Dallas stroked his mustache. What did she know?

"My niece, Mrs. Key," continued the old lady, "has told me that some of our boys have mentioned me kindly to you."

Dallas smiled and acquiesced.

"Is there any war news, major?" asked the twins in a breath.

It was the inevitable question.

"None to-day. Mars Bob still waiting for Burnside to make another attack," replied the major, who kept an answer cut and dried for the people who wanted to hear of a brilliant victory every minute in the day.

"Come, Miss Patty doesn't permit war talk at her parties," said Bo. "They are for the promotion of pleasantness and peace."

"There's alliteration for you, and the best news I have heard yet. But what do you find to talk about?" asked Dallas.

"The last novel, of course," said Madelaine, wheeling a little table before him, and presenting a plate of gumbo which tickled his nose as well as his palate.

"The last novel? The last one published before the blockade, I suppose. How long will it make food for conversation?" said Dallas, laughing.

"Don't be satirical," interposed Bo. "Books do sometimes run the blockade, and the Confederacy has actually given birth to one novel. True, it is of German parentage, translated by a French woman. Have you read Joseph II., the Story of an Emperor, printed on wall paper?"

"Yes, and found it readable trash. Our fellows got hold of a copy this winter and read it to tatters."

"There never was a time when literature was so appreciated," continued Bo. "Books nowadays are few and far between, and really angels' visits. Nobody takes the pains to smuggle any but good ones. Think of the disgrace of being captured with a bad one or a poor one, which is worse. Better be caught with quinine, the last thing our enemies have made contraband of war," she added, woman-like, the first to break the rule she invoked.

"Yes," said Miss Patty, with a truculent shake of her curls, "bad books corrupt morals, and quinine cures fevers; of course the Yankees would prefer the bad books to get through."

"Ah!" cried Madelaine, in a tone of deep disgust, her face assuming its sternest aspect, which was very stern indeed. Like most strong, loving natures, she had a corresponding capacity for dislike, and would have satisfied Dr. Johnson's ideal hater. Yankees and their doings roused the dormant faculty as nothing else could.

"I apologize, Bo," said Miss Patty. "But you be-



gan it, and quinine is one of my sore points. If you had seen as many soldiers die for want of it" —

"Ah!" murmured Madelaine again.

Dallas smiled gravely.

"I wondered how you would keep the war out of conversation. It seems omnipresent."

"Yes, omnipresent as weather, the great topic before the fall of Sumter, or before the fall of Adam, for that matter. With no neighbors and the known world at peace, I can't imagine what else he and Eve had to talk about."

"By the bye," said Dallas, "do you know what is Mars Bob Lee's strongest epithet for the enemy?"

"No; what?" in chorus.

"Those people."

Everybody laughed, and in spite of prohibition fell into an animated discussion of "those people."

After awhile, one of the Miss Matchets changed the subject by remarking, "Before you came in, major, we were asking to see Miss Pritchard's baby, — her adopted baby, you know," correcting herself, with a little old-maidenly blush.

"Yes, her adopted baby," said the other, always on the same track with her sister, but a little behind like the slower of a span. One did the work, the other kept up appearances.

"Thank you, Miss Matchet, for coming to the rescue," said Miss Patty. "Jack Horner is more interesting than either war or weather."

Madelaine, looking at Dallas, admiring his deft management of cup and plate with one hand, caught the light in his eye. He leaned forward and seemed interested in this unlikely topic.

"Jack Horner?" he repeated, "has he come in the flesh? I thought he was a mythical character."

"Yes, come, and in the nick of time," said Miss Patty.

"Old Nick of time, Mr. Larry thinks," interpolated Bo.

Dallas laughed. Miss Disney's tongue and eyes were like sword flashes.

"He stepped out of Mother Goose the night before Christmas," continued Miss Patty, ignoring the interruption.

"The night before Christmas?" echoed Dallas, stroking his mustache. "It was a good time to be born."

"Jack was not born on that night," said Madeline.

Dallas stirred the spoon in his cup.

"I understood Miss Pritchard to say"—

"Come," said Miss Patty, "it is n't fair to talk in riddles. Major Dallas, Jack Horner is the name of a child who was left on our doorstep last Christmas Eve, and has been here ever since. I—well, I suppose I may say I have adopted him, and my friends who used to ask after my cats have transferred their interest to the boy. But young men, I know, do not as a rule care for babies, and we will have Jack in another time to make Miss Matchet's acquaintance."

"By no means! This is the very best time!" exclaimed Dallas, who had been looking gravely in Miss Patty's face, as with some embarrassment she confessed to having, at her age, adopted a baby. "Of all created things, I hold a baby to be the most interesting—theoretically."

Everybody laughed.

"How about practically?" asked Miss Patty.

"Practically, I know very little about them."

"Where does theory come in?" queried Bo.

"Just think of the immense possibilities packed away in so small a compass!" said Dallas, laughing in his turn. "Out of that animated dot of humanity may walk some day a Plato, a Cæsar, a — a" —

"Stonewall Jackson," suggested Madelaine.

"Thank you, yes," carrying up his hand in salute.

"Then we may bring the boy in for a few minutes," said Miss Patty, ringing the bell.

"Yes, for goodness' sake let us have the possible Plato in," said Bo. "I have never thought of him in that light before."

"Yes, bring him in before any more company comes," cried the sisters together, folding up their knitting and stowing it away in antiquated twin muffs.

Jack, nearly two months older than when left on the doorstep, was brought and placed on the threshold of the great double door between the two parlors.

He had learned to steady his legs since we last saw him. Standing firmly on his feet, a finger in his mouth, he turned his large brown eyes fearlessly round on the company.

His nurse, who had lost none of her timidity, kept half hid behind one of the folding-doors, blushing usual and staring at the carpet.

Jack's appearance created a sensation. Breathless "Oh — oh's!" escaped the twins. Boadicea, with a glance at the mirror, owned herself eclipsed.

"You angel!" she cried, clasping her hands.

The child, accustomed to feminine adulation, received these raptures calmly. He was coolly balancing the claims of his rival admirers.

Miss Patty looked anxiously expectant. Madelaine's face warmed and softened. Dallas, clean forgotten, looked on with profound interest. He knew what, in Jack's place, he would do. What would Jack do? If a masculine soul dwelt in the little body; if out of that animated dot of humanity was to come some day a Cæsar, a Jackson, or even a Plato, he would feel impelled by the mother-look which transformed the nice-looking face into woman's tenderest beauty.

The major saw and understood, as with a flash, how much more acute than himself had been the little Frenchman. The latter at a glance had divined something of her history.

Jack did not hesitate long.

He bestowed half a glance on the purring twins, who held out their muffs as decoy kittens and wooed him to come and rub poor pussy's back; Boadicea's brilliant prettiness caught his attention for a moment; Miss Patty's wistful eyes touched his heart a little, and he rewarded her with a smile; but he walked straight to Madelaine and laid his head on her knees.

An electric thrill passed through Dallas; a touch of nature makes the world kin. The man felt overmastering kinship with the boy. With a long-drawn, almost audible sigh, he recognized that Jack had a masculine soul.

Madelaine, unconscious of what was going on in the major's breast, took the boy in her arms. On her fair, firmly-rounded chin was a tiny birthmark, dark and

tantalizing, like a fly in cream. This, with a dimple in her cheek, which came and went with her smile, were delightful mysteries Jack was never tired of investigating. He touched them with his rosy fingers now. Finding that they did not fly away, as he half feared, he put up his mouth and kissed them.

Dallas, vigorously stroking his mustache, looked on, and reversed his decision that Jack could ever become a Plato. At the conclusion of this little drama, enacted in about thirty seconds, Miss Patty remembered to introduce her new friend.

"Major Dallas, I beg pardon. Allow me to present you to little Jack Horner, future President of the Confederate States."

"Delighted to make his Excellency's acquaintance," said Dallas, his jocular words accompanied with earnest contemplation of the future president.

His deep voice, breaking for the first time on the staccato of feminine admiration, attracted Jack's smiling notice. But at that moment a little crash of crockery in the back parlor, and an exclamation from the nurse, drew all eyes to Mrs. Manning. By a sudden movement she had overturned a small table, on which were a cup and saucer. Cup and saucer were in atoms, and she was hastily picking up the pieces. She had cut her finger with a sharp fragment of the delicate china. A few drops of blood were on her hand, while all the blood seemed to have left her face. She looked so white and scared that Miss Patty said, —

"Never mind. It was n't your fault. The cup ought not to have been left there, and these little Japan tables are so easily upset."

Dallas's attention being attracted to the accident, he noticed the nurse for the first time. His face changed.

Luckily for the woman's confusion, the door-bell at that moment announced other visitors. Speedily removing the traces of her awkwardness, she took Jack from Mrs. Key, and disappeared.

"Do you know Mrs. Manning?" asked Bo, left to entertain Dallas, while Miss Patty and Madelaine went forward to receive the new-comer.

Dallas looked toward the door. "The lady coming in? No, I've never had the pleasure of seeing her before."

"I don't mean the lady coming in, but the nurse going out."

Dallas arched his eyebrows. "The nurse? No, I don't know her. Is her name Manning?"

"Yes, and I fancied you looked as if you had seen *her* before."

"You fancied correctly. It seemed to me I *had* seen her before."

"To think of her breaking that beautiful Dresden cup!"

Dallas felt that he had not chosen the best day for returning the handkerchief. Its sad association with poor Fairfax made him wish to give it back at a more propitious moment than he was likely to get on this occasion.

He had hoped to find Madelaine and her aunt alone, at this early hour. But Miss Pritchard's at-home days were very popular. Intimates, and neighbors like the Matchets, began to come before noon, and later on her rooms were apt to be crowded with all sorts of people

who were glad to meet each other under her roof. There, fashionable people forgot to be condescending, and the unfashionable to be sensitive.

Dallas found his opportunity only as he was leaving the house. Mrs. Key had gone into the hall to speak to a servant about replenishing the ever-emptying bowl, and under the shadow of the staircase he had a word with her alone.

Taking the handkerchief from his bosom, he said, as lightly as was compatible with it being much less than he felt, "Mrs. Key, I hope this little token will be a bond of friendship between us."

Madelaine's eyes, which had a darker or softer light for every shade of feeling, were raised to his. They were dark and tender, now, remembering Fairfax.

"Oh, yes," she sighed softly; "I promise that."

The glance and sigh kindled a sudden and unfamiliar warmth about the young soldier's heart, which sent a glowing message to his cheek.

Mrs. Key's eyes fell.

Here was another person turning red at her.

"Good-morning," stammered Dallas, as he touched her hand, which would have matched that of Sir Roger de Coverley's widow.

"Good-morning," she returned calmly. "You will come and see us again, I hope."

The reception over, Miss Patty retired to a sofa to take a nap. Madelaine and Bo drew their chairs close to the fire to review the incidents of the day. At least, that was their custom, but on this occasion their thoughts seemed to have concentrated on one point or more, or, properly speaking, one person.

"Well?" said Bo impressively.

"Well?" echoed Madelaine quietly, shading her eyes from the glowing embers.

"What do you think of it?" asked Bo, seeing her companion failed to enlarge on the subject occupying her thoughts.

"It?" echoed Madelaine again, not grasping Bo's meaning.

"Well, *him*, if you like that better. I mean Major Dallas."

"Major Dallas," repeated Madelaine, annoyed to feel her own face turning red at the recollection of his uncalled-for blush. "I think him a very nice person."

"Is it possible, Madelaine, you did not notice something remarkable in his behavior?"

This was getting personal. What could Boadicea mean? She had not seen that foolish reddening of his face, which, after all, was more provoking than remarkable.

"No," she answered meditatively; "I think his behavior very like that of most men."

"Do most men change color?" — Madelaine started — "at sight of Mrs. Manning?"

"Mrs. Manning! What do you mean?"

"And does Mrs. Manning smash Dresden china cups at sight of most men?" continued Bo.

Madelaine sat bolt upright in her chair.

"Boadicea, what do you mean?" she asked, so vehemently that Miss Patty stirred in her sleep.

"Sh!" whispered Bo, with a finger on her lips. "I believe," when all was quiet on the sofa, "he knows something about Jack Horner!"



"You don't say so!" gasped Madelaine, to whom the suggestion came like a thunder-clap. "What happened? I saw nothing of all this."

"No, you were too much occupied with the brat. You have eyes for nobody else when he is in the room."

"I believe you are right. But tell me. Do you think — You don't think" —

"I think," said Bo, drawing her chair closer, speaking with the low-voiced, eager delight of a child telling a ghost story, — "I think, yes, I am *sure*, that he and Mrs. Manning have met before, and I believe they both know something about Jack. I felt it in the air like rain, or a storm, or something."

"But we have done that before," said Madelaine.

"Did you notice how interested he seemed in Jack?"

"Everybody is that. But, Bo, you don't mean you think it likely that — that" — floundered Madelaine, trying to convey her meaning without expressing it — "that Major Dallas is *kin* to the boy?"

"No," said Bo, serenely unconscious of any difficulty. "I know the Dallas family. There are no children in it except his sister's, and she is a most devoted mother. Nobody would dare to leave one of her babies on a doorstep, although there are troops of them, and not much money."

"And Major Dallas himself?"

"Oh, no, that is impossible. Major Dallas has never been married."

Madelaine stirred the fire.

"I believe Mrs. Manning is the mother of the

baby," continued Bo, jumping at a conclusion with the agility that characterized all her mental operations. "I have been thinking it out ever since Mrs. Manning started as if she had been shot, at the sound of Major Dallas's voice. It is a case of Moses in the bulrushes."

Bo paused for breath, and Madelaine stared, not seeing the connection.

"You know when little Moses—to think of his ever being little—was put among the flags, his sister stood by to see what would happen, and when Pharaoh's daughter wanted a nurse for the baby, the sister went and brought Moses's"—struggling with the possessive case—"mother."

"Well?"

"Don't you see? Miss Patty is Pharaoh's daughter who adopted the baby; Jack is little Moses; and Mrs. Manning is Mrs. Levi, or whatever the child's mother was called."

"And what part do you assign Major Dallas?"

"Oh, he is the sister, I dare say, who went off and brought the mother. You know no parallel walks on four legs."

"The sister," mused Madelaine, studying the dissolving views in the fire. "Well, I hope if Major Dallas had anything to do with the matter it was as a sister. But you are wrong, Bo; the child cannot be Mrs. Manning's, for Aunt Patty says she had just lost one about Jack's age when he was brought here."

"Maybe she did n't lose it. Maybe Jack is the child," said Bo, who did not like giving up the pretty story into which she had so ingeniously fitted the parts.

"Nonsense! What object could she have?"

"What object?" exclaimed Bo. "Anybody to look at the pampered brat could see what object."

"I have always found Mrs. Manning rather a mysterious person," admitted Madelaine, after a pause. "But I don't see what Major Dallas can have to do with it."

"Neither do I; but that is what we shall have to find out — the unknown quantity."

"I hope you are not off on another wild-geese chase," sighed Madelaine, who began to regret having enlisted such vigilance as Bo's in the pursuit.

"Well, I don't know. Wild geese are as good game as most things. It is the pursuit, after all, that interesting."

When Bo was gone, Madelaine remembered with a start that the letter on Jack's clothing was D, and congratulated herself that she had never informed Bo of the fact.

## X.

### MOONSHINE.

ENVIRONMENT, which to-day is supposed to play so large a part in determining man's character and fate, added whatever influence it possesses to the impression Mrs. Key made on Dallas. He had seen her four times, and each time the environment had been such as to throw into high relief her peculiar attractiveness, and the circumstances such as he would have long remembered without the charm which made them indelible. He pretty soon discovered that something had happened to him, — something so unexpected as to fill him with wonder, yet so unmistakable as to leave him no doubt in the matter. He had fallen in love, and with a widow! Perhaps a man always feels a certain twinge, it may be of jealousy, it may be of disappointment, but at any rate a twinge, when he finds himself in love with a widow. Dallas was no exception to the rule. He had his bad quarter of an hour on the subject. As in the case of every other man, it was in direct opposition to all his preconceived ideas. But love, although it is nothing new to say, is a conjurer who transforms objections into incentives, and presto! the twinge of jealousy, or what not, becomes only another and stronger motive for devotion. So it was with the major. The bucket of cold water which

had taken his breath away when he learned that Madeline was madame, so far from extinguishing his ardor, had added fuel to flame.

Human blood at that time was of a splendid red color, as a hundred fields could testify. It had not yet become the languid, lukewarm tide which evolves the pale emotions of a modern American novel.

There was no possibility of Dallas mistaking with whom he was in love, and he was as deeply in as if his love had been the growth of years, — as much in love as Mark Antony, Paris, or any lover in the centuries before this cool nineteenth. It was the identical passion which in all ages has made a man do all, suffer all, lose all, for a woman. It is dying out, going out of fashion, now. It had lost none of its heaven-born savor then. It would have made Dallas, if need be, “launch a thousand ships” as readily as Mark Antony, but being in the other branch of the service, and the Confederacy having no navy to speak of, he could only testify in a thousand delicate ways his entire devotion. Mrs. Key may or may not have perceived this state of things. She did not betray by her manner whether she did or not. The truth was, she had become interested, in a half-credulous sort of way, in Bo’s theory as to his knowing something about Jack, and was studying him from that point of view. On one occasion, when she was talking with him and Miss Disney, Jack being the subject of discussion and eulogy, Bo turned to Dallas with the abruptness with which she sometimes startled people.

“Major, I am dying to ask if you know anything about Jack.”

"I don't see why you should hesitate. I am quite willing to tell you what I know." Bo glanced up eagerly. "I know he is a very fine boy."

"Oh, everybody knows that; but do you know how he came to be left at Miss Patty's door?"

"Does n't she say he was left by a young man in uniform?"

Bo, baffled and recognizing her indiscretion, turned red, but, having begun, plunged a step further.

"I mean," laughing uneasily, "do you know who left him there?"

"Miss Disney!"

His tone and glance of well-bred surprise silenced her, a feat rarely performed by any man, and she remained quiet for a time.

"Boadicea," said Madelaine severely, when they were left alone, "how *could* you?"

"Looking back, I don't see how I could. At the time, it was irresistible. But I am not convinced."

Madelaine had given her whole heart to Jack, not only nor chiefly because of his own attractions, but because he revived the maternal feeling which, for a short while, had glorified her married life. She had lost a boy about a year old, and her heart had never ceased to ache with the emptiness which took possession of it when the child died. Jack filled the void. Like the touch of spring, he unlocked the fountains, quickened the bloom, and wakened the melodies in the deep recesses of her nature.

Now Dallas was not a man to do things by halves. Having laid his heart at Mrs. Key's feet, he desired to lose no time in telling her it was there, to do with as

she liked. If there is an occasion when a woman's ingenuity comes into fullest play, it is when she wishes to prevent a man doing this.

Days, weeks, passed. Their intercourse was frequent and on the most friendly footing, yet Dallas never found an opportunity to say what he wanted.

Always when he neared the point there came, apparently in the most natural way, an interruption, and he was obliged to swallow his disappointment and hope for better luck next time. He was too single-minded to suspect any intention in all this, and being a man of great patience quietly bided his time. At last, an unexpected opportunity occurred, of which he was not slow to take advantage. It was an afternoon in March.

Dallas and Mrs. Key had planned with Miss Disney and her friend St. Maur a walking expedition to a country place on the outskirts of town, for the purpose of getting a drink of cool water. The want of ice was one of the greatest privations in Richmond during the war. The first mild weather and the prevalence of salt food combined to produce intense thirst. The river water, tepid and exceedingly turbid from spring rains, was not a tempting beverage. Any one possessing a well of passably clear, cool water was considered exceptionally fortunate. A well on the premises of a deserted homestead on the edge of town, whose water had the exaggerated reputation of being clear as crystal and cold as ice, became a fashionable resort. Here afternoon promenaders, meeting round a brimming bucket, quaffed, laughed, and flirted with as much zest as the pleasure seekers who long ago forgathered in the famous pump-room at the royal resort of Bath.

Bo and St. Maur, on this occasion, were late in keeping their appointment.

When the party set out for the rustic watering-place, everybody else was returning.

"Bo," said Madelaine severely, "are you ever on time?"

"Never, except for dinner," said Bo, sparkling. She was looking her best, although outside the Confederacy her costume would have made the gods laugh. Having St. Maur with her she had not hurried to be punctual. His companionship had the effect on her that another product of his country has on the average female temperament. She was flushed, animated, and brilliant. Her tactics were altogether different from Madelaine's. She believed that it was only fair to give a man a chance to say what he wanted to say. St. Maur, too, was as effervescent as if he had been of the famous vintage of 18—.

Bo's face shone at the end of a long vista of bonnet, and she was habited in the fashionable wrap of the war period, a long black garment made of any procurable material, which enveloped the figure from head to foot, and was called a basquine, corrupted in fashionable colored circles into "bearskin." It was a convenient wrapping. Bo went so far as to say she believed a special providence had ordained that peculiar style for the times, because it served to cover cords of Confederate rags.

"Yes," she continued, "I am always prompt at meals, impelled by a double team, a sense of duty and a sense of hunger."

"I wish I had asked you to dinner, then."



"You would be sorry now if you had, if your larder is as low and your appetite as good as mine."

"See," said Madelaine gravely, not mollified by this persiflage, "everybody is coming back."

"Well, dear," coaxingly, "we need not mind, so long as they leave the well behind."

Dallas and St. Maur laughed. Miss Disney was inextinguishable.

It seemed to Madelaine that she was bent on being perverse, or so occupied with her own affairs as to forget other people's, which amounts to the same thing.

When at last they arrived at the well, and while Dallas with his one arm was employed in lowering the bucket, Bo proposed to St. Maur to take a peep at the grounds round the house.

The place was uninhabited, as so many homesteads had come to be. The father and sons were probably soldiers, and the rest of the family scattered. The deserted home presented that semblance of death which clings to everything where life has been, and from which it has departed. The closed shutters, smokeless chimneys, and grass-grown entrance were as suggestive as a mound in a churchyard. The garden was a desolate tangle of weeds and briars, with only here and there a blossom to tell of better days. A clump of naked trees behind the house made a sombre background. Over all, a young moon shed its tender radiance.

In the witchery of its light, even the old well, with its rude shed and clumsy windlass, was beautiful against the amber sky. Bo and her companion wandered off and did not shortly return. Their voices, now near, now far, echoed through the stillness of the deserted

garden, as they wandered through its tangled walks, gathering the few early buds that held their own among the weeds.

Troubled by Bo's desertion, Madelaine stood by very pale and grave, while Dallas landed the dripping bucket on the side of the well. Her face and the face of the young moon over her shoulder were reflected in the water shining darkly within the bucket's rim.

The picture made Dallas's heart beat quicker. He would have sworn that Endymion, seeing the two faces trembling side by side in their oaken frame, would have loved the woman's human beauty rather than the cold, white loveliness of the moon. And yet, the moon with all her coldness had come down to Endymion ; what if — But this was no time to be dreaming of myths. The occasion he had so often sought and missed had come upon him suddenly unawares.

The question should he try his fate rushed over him like a flood, and for a moment deprived him of speech.

His hand trembled as he gave her a cup of water. Hers trembled as she received it. This little sign of discomposure restored his courage. The blood flowed back from his heart and reddened his face with the glow of dawn.

Mrs. Key drained the cup slowly. She was gaining time. She hoped Bo and her companion would come back. All signs of them had disappeared. Even their voices were still, or sunk so low that Madelaine's straining ear caught no sound. At last, when there was no longer a shadow of excuse for holding the cup to her lips, she gave it back to Dallas, with an attempt at lightness.

"The water is really cold. Aren't you going to try some? Are n't you thirsty?"

"Thirsty?" echoed Dallas. "Yes, and hungry, too; but this is not what I want."

"You—you want the moon?" still trying to be playful, as she looked down on the slim crescent shimmering in the bucket.

"Yes," smiling gravely at her fencing; "I am a child crying for the moon, which always eludes me—so!" dipping the cup in the liquid silver of the moon's reflection and bringing up cold, colorless water. Then throwing them aside, he drew a step nearer.

"Mrs. Key!"

Madelaine knew the time for fencing had passed. His voice was too significant for commonplace. She raised her eyes to look frankly in his face, as friend and comrade. Her glance fell. It is cruel to read a man's soul without sympathy, and Dallas's was laid bare in eyes which expressed more eloquently than words that he was indeed ahungered and athirst, but not for comradeship.

"Mrs. Key!" he cried, in the white heat of long-suppressed passion. "You know I love you; why won't you let me tell you so?"

Madelaine's eyes filled, responsive to the tremor in his voice, as she answered steadily,—

"Because I am so happy in our friendship."

"Friendship!"

His great scorn of the word made her feel unutterably trivial.

"Is n't friendship a good thing?" she asked meekly.

"It is not what I want."

"I am sorry," was all she found to say, while the tears which had risen splashed her cheeks, leaving her face white and glistening as the moon's mirrored in the water.

"Do you mean you can never love me?" he asked, the wounded look in his eyes stabbing her like a knife.

"I mean I can never love anybody, and it is very desolate to lose my friends."

"*Friends!* and you did not know I loved you?" groaned Dallas. "Is it possible for a man to give himself, body and soul, to love for a woman, and she not know it?"

"I knew," stammered Madelaine with compunction, "but not until lately, and I hoped when you saw it was impossible for me to love, you would continue to be my friend."

"And you could not see that *that* was impossible?" huskily.

Her eyes fell; she had been blind.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Key," he went on brokenly; "I should not have pained you in this way, but you have been so kind. It may be my hopes have led me astray, I"—

Madelaine's cheeks grew hot with self-accusing blushes. Dallas was right. His pale, grieved face revealed, as in a flash, that she had been both blind and selfish. She recognized the fact that in addition to friendship, she had shown a peculiar interest in him, which he had naturally misinterpreted. Her fault was all the greater that he was so single-minded and unsuspicious.

Madelaine's family called her quixotic. It is cer-

tain she possessed the spirit of self-sacrifice common to high-spirited, generous natures. To those who remember the war, it is needless to say that among women especially it was a time of tremendous sacrifices. Everything that could be given to the cause or the soldiers of the cause was surrendered gladly. It was preëminently a mark and sign of the time. In addition to this impelling community of sentiment, Madelaine was now swayed by personal motives. Newman has said that temptation is never so subtle as when it comes in the form of self-sacrifice. This temptation came to Madelaine in the tense, painful silence that followed Dallas's broken sentences. A flood of eager questioning assailed her as she stood irresolute, confronting his pale, haggard face.

Was it not laid upon her to redeem the promise made by her unthinking conduct? Had she a right to encourage hope in a man's soul, only to disappoint him in the end? — at a time, too, when every true man carried his life in his hand, ready to give it up at any moment for home and country; when each to-morrow's sun looked down on pale, dead faces that yesterday were flushed with youth and hope. What better use could she make of her blighted life than to dedicate it to the happiness of this good friend, this brave man and true patriot whom all men delighted to honor? All this and more passed through her mind with the speed of thought, untrammelled by words. Her countenance betrayed hesitation. Her look of stern denial softened under the influence of arguments with which temptation in the noble form of self-sacrifice assailed her.

Dallas could not read her thoughts, but he saw in

her face that his case was being reconsidered. He gathered courage.

"Madelaine," he cried, his voice trembling as he pronounced the name uttered hitherto only in dreams, — "Madelaine, can you *never* love me?"

She was silent for awhile, which seemed eternity to Dallas, who waited her answer, his heart booming like cannon in his ears. At last she spoke.

"Never," shaking her head sadly, "as you would have me love you. You know I already love you as a dear, dear friend, but you will have none of that. It seems so little to give, but if you will" —

"Little!" he cried, interrupting her halting sentence, his face irradiated by this small concession. "If you will let me, I shall spend my life in making it much."

"No, no," she cried, pained and frightened by his look of happiness, which she was sure she could never satisfy. "I don't deserve that you should love me so much. I have no heart to give. You will regret" —

"I'm not afraid," he said, with glad confidence, for the first time probably in his career, for it is not brave men who are most ready to proclaim that they are not afraid.

"Then this is the most courageous act of your life," smiling sadly, as he accepted her friendship in exchange for his great love.

"That you give me leave to try and win your love gives me courage for life or death," said Dallas, his voice vibrating with love and happiness as they turned to look for Bo and St. Maur, whose voices, coming nearer, were heard among the brambles of the garden.

Night was falling when, Bo and her companion having partaken of the water, the party turned their faces toward town, whose lights like stars were beginning one by one to glimmer in the distance. There was not much conversation in that homeward walk. Dallas was too happy, and Madelaine too preoccupied with the turn in her destiny, for small talk. Bo was busy wondering why St. Maur had said nothing of importance in the garden, by moonlight, too. St. Maur was too susceptible to outside influences to feel like talking when others wanted to be silent. Only a scattering fire of words came from the party that had started out with more or less volubility.

When they reached home, and Bo with St. Maur had gone their way, Madelaine begged Dallas not to come in. "I want to think it all over by myself," she urged gently. "Come to-morrow," she added quickly, her heart smiting her anew, seeing the disappointment in his face.

They turned away from each other with an intense but unspoken desire that her love, which she said was little, might become much.

After he had gone, Madelaine, trying to get to her room unperceived, felt her spirits rise. She ran up stairs with a lighter heart and even a glow of satisfaction, as she thought of him.

"I am proud of him, at any rate, and that is a good foundation for affection," she decided, as she tried to explain to herself why she liked him better when he was away. Then she shivered as she compared this reasonable feeling with the passion of long ago, when she loved not for reason, but for love's sake.

On her way to her room she went into the nursery to look at Jack. She always peeped at him asleep before she went to bed, and now she felt more than ever an irresistible desire to see him. He had been the innocent cause of her misleading Dallas and changing her own destiny. She did not feel that she would love the child less for this, but after the inconsequent fashion of women, a thousand times more. With the woman devotee, the more complete the sacrifice, the more ardent the worship. She stole into the nursery on tiptoe. Nobody was there but Jack fast asleep in his cradle. Mrs. Manning, having tucked him in snugly, had gone to get her tea in the kitchen. A fire in the grate burned low, and the night light was turned down. The room's luxurious warmth, the subdued light, and Jack's soft breathing fell like a benediction of peace on her troubled spirit. She leaned over the boy, and pressed a kiss on his little pink, outstretched palms. Remembering her own boy, she put an aching heartful of love into the passionate caress. Jack stirred in his sleep. A baby's bright, evanescent smile, as if at a glimpse of some celestial vision, quivered on his rosy mouth.

"Their angels do always behold the face of God," she murmured, recalling these inscrutable words with a thrill of joy. Her heart — and what mother's does not? — always turned heavenward when she thought of her dead. Then with a quick revulsion of feeling she remembered Dallas.

"Jack! Jack! What have you made me do?" she cried, raining warm kisses on his baby mouth.

And Jack, dreaming of supper, stirred in his sleep and smiled again.



## XI.

### 'TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP.

AFTER Fredericksburg, winter and early spring wore on in daily, hourly expectation of another great battle. But the Federal army, stuck fast in Virginia mud, could not move, and Confederate soldiers devoured their hearts in inaction. During the interval, Dallas had the good fortune to be detained on special service in Richmond, where every moment not required by business was devoted to Mrs. Key. As time passed, Madelaine became accustomed to her new position. She liked Hugh Dallas better than any man she knew. She was proud of his reputation, and enjoyed his society more than that of any man or even woman, which is saying much, for Madelaine seriously held that she preferred women's society to men's.

Hugh, on his part, was not exacting and did not press the situation, but carried out manfully his intention of devoting all his powers to making her love him more than a little. Madelaine, unconscious of cruelty, enjoyed the subtle and refined incense of a passion which for her sake assumed the speech and guise of friendship. She did not know it was equivalent to accepting libations of blood from a man's heart. Hugh thought himself happy when he could hope, as he sometimes did, that he was slowly gaining ground.

Meanwhile, the hard winter was beginning to break, and Virginia roads were becoming more passable. Nature was astir with the new birth of spring, and signs of activity in both armies were apparent. Hugh long remembered the day when, having decided that his arm was as well as it would ever be, he threw aside bandages and sling, and donned a new uniform. It was not so easy as the old one, so liberally garnished with mud, to say nothing of blood, but it was more becoming. Probably, Dallas did not know how well he looked in the fresh, well-fitting suit, whose clean gray tint and gold trappings set off his advantages of form and color. Other people knew. Passing through the streets, men noting his bronzed face, straight back, and clean step, thought him a good specimen of a soldier. At his approach every woman spruced her features into a neat smile of appreciation.

He quite dazzled Madelaine with the splendor of his war-paint when in the evening he entered Miss Patty's parlor, where she sat alone reading. She threw her book aside and rose to meet him, eyes brightening, dimples deepening, with welcome.

"A new uniform, and your arm out of the sling! How glad I am!"

She had never beamed on him so kindly. His heart swelled with pride and happiness. His joy was dashed when she added, "We shall need all our good arms in the next battle."

Evidently she was thinking more of the soldier than the man. He did not lose patience. He was only too happy that she thought of him at all. She was thinking of him more than he imagined. She had become

sensitive to his moods, and divined that behind his satisfaction at having his arm free, something weighed on his mind.

"What is it, friend?" she asked, — friend being the appellation she gave him in her tenderer moments. It was for him her nearest approach to a caress, and, although less than he desired, pleased him to the heart's core.

He looked fondly in her eyes without answering.

"What is it, friend?" she repeated, and by way of emphasizing her question touched one of the bright buttons on his new uniform. Her hand hovering over his breast made him tremble. He would have given his life to grasp it and cover it with kisses, but he knew that to do so would make her shrink away from him. That she held it so near his violently throbbing heart and felt that he was in trouble were great gains on his past experience. He did not dare to frighten away her growing confidence. His well-tutored eyes dwelt on the firm white beauty of her hand, the turn of her wrist, a glimpse of her arm, as if he saw them not. It was some moments before he could get like command of his voice. Finally, he answered, —

"Something that troubles me more than it will you, dear."

"Has the enemy advanced?" she asked, changing color, by turns white with apprehension and red with the war spirit.

"Nothing so important as that," he answered gently, hiding his disappointment at her question. Her thoughts were all with the army. "Only that I have received orders, and shall have to leave town in two hours."

"Leave in two hours?" she cried, turning altogether pale, his intelligence, although hourly looked for, coming with a shock at last, like death, however long expected. "In two hours?" she repeated, realizing in a moment all that his going meant for her: supreme sympathy, companionship, friendship, everything that makes a woman's happiness, swept out of her life; a sovereign suddenly deprived of her dominion. And who could tell if he would come back? Partings were so much more common than meetings in those sad days.

Her quivering lip and the undisguised regret in her voice made Hugh forget everything but his love. They nearly broke the strenuous curb with which he held himself. For once she seemed to be thinking more of the man than the soldier.

"You are sorry? You will miss me?" his honest face brightening all over.

"Miss you? Oh, Hugh!" her hand passing from the button on his breast to his arm, where it rested, trembling. She had never called him by his name before. Her utterance of that one word stirred his blood like the music of a love song. Her hand nestling on his arm, her blush as she made this first timid demonstration, her quickened respiration and fragrant breath, intoxicated his senses, but he made no sign. He would be her friend until she wished him to be something more. He had once declared this to be impossible. With a gleam of hope, he had found that to love like his all things are possible.

"Madelaine," he said tenderly, "I am going back to the army."

Madelaine shivered.

"Oh, Hugh!"

"It is not far away, dear, and I may have the good luck to be sent here again with dispatches, and then I shall see you. But you know the fortune of war, I may" —

"Oh, don't, *don't* say it!"

She had parted with her brothers and many another young fellow on the same dismal errand, and had bade them Godspeed with a spirit intrepid as theirs. Her courage failed now. It may be she was only beginning to realize Hugh's patient devotion and her poor return. The sting of self-reproach sharpened the pain of parting. Hugh, on his part, may have perceived the feeling, and refused to owe to remorse what he asked from love. He spoke to her very gently, very tenderly, as one of her brothers might have done. "We will not *say* it, dear, but we know it all the same. If I do not come back" —

"If — you — do — not — come — back" — she repeated brokenly, her bosom heaving as she drew nearer to him.

He inhaled the perfume of her hair, felt the throbbing of her heart close to his. He trembled from head to foot.

"If I do not come back, you will remember how I loved you."

"Remember? How can I forget? Oh, Hugh, is there nothing more?"

"That is all that even love can ask, dearest," stroking her cold hands.

"But you *will* come back. God favors our cause, and

He will keep you safe. He *must*, we cannot lose *men* like you. You bear a charmed life. Remember *Manassas*, Antietam, Fredericksburg! You *will* come back."

"God grant it, if it will make you happier, love."

"How can you doubt it? But how little I have done to make *you* happy! Remember? Of course I shall remember to my death day. Dearest Hugh, can't I *do* something for you?"

"Madelaine," he said hoarsely, as he held her trembling hands, "you know all I want is your love."

"I do love you," she whispered, blushing scarlet.

"Yes, a little."

"Oh, Hugh!"

"When I am gone, perhaps you will love me more, and *that* will make me happier alive — or dead."

"Hugh," she repeated, raising her convulsed, tear-stained face, "can't I *do* something for you?"

He took her face in his hands and looked fondly down upon it. "*Will* you do something for me?"

The quick-moving blood swept over cheek and neck again, and receding, left her ashen pale. She closed her eyes, and pressing her hand to her side murmured, "I will do what you wish, Hugh."

His heart gave a great leap.

"Do you mean it, darling?" he asked, his pulses beating tumultuously. "You know I have but one wish."

His eager, happy face strengthened her resolution.

"I mean it," she said steadily, putting one of her cold hands in his by way of attestation.

"Are you quite sure, Madelaine? The time is

short, and I did not mean to press you, love. God knows I would die — I meant to die rather than trouble you. You know we have only one hour."

"I know, and " —

"And " —

"Within the hour I will marry you."



## XII.

### THERE 'S MANY A SLIP.

DURING the war, the emotions and events of an ordinary lifetime were often crowded into short space. Lads who had not mastered the spelling-book were graduated veterans in carnage. Marriages were made in the halt between two battles. Brides were widowed before the honeymoon began.

As spring advanced, the thrill that quickened all nature into life passed along both armies, rousing them to their work of death. Both sides were eager for the struggle that would blacken the spring sunshine, scatter the peace of field and meadow, drench young herbage in gore, ruin lives, break hearts, and send souls to their account. In Richmond, anticipation of a battle was always a time of great spiritual exaltation. Stillness brooded over human souls like the hush that presages a devastating storm. Prayer, freed from the dross of self, besieged heaven as a pure flame. Love showed itself capable of heroism. Friendship was tender as love.

At such a time, Dallas was suddenly recalled to the army, and Madelaine, profoundly moved, agreed to marry him as soon as he could procure a license and a parson.



Improvised weddings were not uncommon then. A wedding is always interesting, and the Pritchard household were duly excited when it became known Mrs. Key was to be married within an hour. Miss Key, like all spinsters, inclined to weep over birth marriages, was tearful and sympathetic as she arranged the drawing-room furniture to make space for the performance of the solemn ordinance. Larry was important over the part he was to take in replying to the question, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" Mrs. Manning hurried Jack into his best, freshest frock. The negro servants tidied themselves as best they could at such short notice.

Half-past eight was the hour appointed for the ceremony. The little company assembled, the family on one side of the room, the servants on the other, in a half-glad, half-sad expectation. A wedding from which the groom was to depart for the battlefield has a tragic side. On the other hand, it were better for him to wed although so soon parted, than not to wed. The family between smiles and tears tried to keep cheerful talk. The negroes, believing a wedding occasion for jollity, were in a broad grin.

Mr. Key, outwardly calm, his eyes glowing with happiness, his face flushed with haste, — the parson and the bridegroom had been at opposite ends of the town, — entered the room some minutes before the time. He had no doubt the bride was all right, the parson would be with them directly. Madelaine had not made her appearance. Minutes passed, and all eyes turned towards the clock. Where was the bride? The bridegroom, ever glad to marry her lover, was ever bridegroom? This one-clad in mourning, deathly pale, her

eyes circled with dark shadows, entered the room as a single stroke marked the hour.

"Good Lord! She's got on a black frock," whispered Afra, horror-stricken.

"She ain't got no other kind," sensibly returned the chambermaid.

"She won't have no luck all her life. An' de groom gwine out to fight, too. I'll git de blooms off my rose juranium. She mus' have some color to her; an' look at dem cheeks, as white as ef she was gwine to be buried stead o' married!"

"For de Lord's sake, stop croakin," said the other.

Afra, herself resplendent in color, bustled off for the geranium blossom. Madelaine turned a shade paler when she perceived that the clergyman had not arrived. She had nerved herself to do anything but wait.

"Mr. Rothwell not come?" she asked anxiously, trying to smile in Hugh's face.

"Oh, he will be here presently, and I'm going to give you away," said Larry encouragingly.

Madelaine felt as if she would choke. It was a relief when Jack, sent by Afra, toddled across the room, and held up to her a bunch of pink flowers.

It took some time to fasten them in her dress. When she raised her head, they glistened as if wet with dew.

"Tears, Madelaine!" exclaimed Larry, who, with the best intentions, usually contrived to make a crisis harrowing. "That will never do for a bride, and a soldier's bride, too."

"Is not my soldier going away?" she asked, with a brave smile.

Hugh's glowing eyes thanked and blessed her, as he pressed her hand, which she had passed through his arm.

"Will Mr. Rothwell never come?" thought Madelaine, the minutes dragging like hours.

Hugh began to look anxiously at the clock. He had an appointment with the Secretary of War at nine, with barely time to catch the train going later to the seat of war.

"Where was Mr. Rothwell when you found him, major?" asked Miss Patty, her voice trembling with suppressed excitement.

"At the hospital," said Dallas, his countenance changing as he recalled the scene, "helping a wounded man through his last fight but the poor fellow had become unconscious, and Rothwell said he would come at once."

Miss Patty's excitement extended to the others. Everybody was breathless with expectation. Every ear was strained to catch a coming footstep, when a great clanging sound, with long, trembling reverberations, swallowed up all other sounds, and brought everybody to their feet with blanched cheeks. "Clang, clang, clang!" it rang, filling the air and deafening the ear with its vibrations, carrying the same message to every intelligence. It was an agreed signal. The enemy was at the gate. There was but one answer to be made.

"Go, Hugh!" cried Madelaine, recovering in a moment and raising her lips to his for their first kiss.

"Go, Larry!" cried Miss Patty, forgetting to tremble, as she brought from the hall a rifle that always stood there.

The air still hummed with the vibrations of the great town bell.

Hugh drew from his pocket the ring which was to have been their wedding ring, and placed it on Madelaine's finger. Then he caught her in his arms, and straining her to his breast kissed her brow, eyes, and mouth. "Good-by, my darling — my love — my life — my *wife*."

Madelaine plucked the bruised flowers from her bosom and pressed them into his. "Take these, dear Hugh, and remember my prayers go with you."

With one last, loving look he went away.

Larry, his puerilities dropping from him like a garment, followed with the heart and bearing of a man.

"Go, Dannel, you nigger, go," cried Afra, nudging the coachman, "an' take car o' Mars Larry."

"'Tain't wuth yo while tellin' me dat, I was gwine anyhow," buttoning up his coat, and hurrying after his master.

The women were left alone. The hours wore on in an agony of suspense. God alone knew what was going to happen. The reserves had been called out. All night long, the streets resounded with the tramp of soldiers, the creaking of gun-carriages, the clamor of excited men and frightened women, while not far away flashed the lightning and roared the thunder of artillery.

With the morning came tidings that there had been no general engagement, but that a small force of the enemy had made a bold raid upon the town, and had been repulsed. This was one of the vicissitudes of war.

At dawn, Madelaine, hearing the good news, threw herself on her bed to rest.

Afra, drawing her curtains to shut out the rising day, said in a soft, crooning tone full of regret, —

“La, Miss Madelin, you did n’t git married arter all.”

Madelaine buried her face in her pillow and murmured, “Thank God !” Then, with a pang of remorse, she breathed a soft “God forgive me !”

### XIII.

#### THE SON OF HIS COUNTRY.

WHEN the excitement attendant upon the raid had subsided, Richmond burst forth in renewed gayety. It is always so. The temper of a city pressed close by hostile armies is abnormal, as in hysteria when laughter follows hard upon tears, and tears give place to laughter.

It is true that some of Richmond's best citizens had lost their lives, and many slaves had gone off with the raiders, but the defense on the whole was successful. The Federal colonel who led the expedition had been killed, and his men driven within their lines near Fredericksburg. The Richmond dead were buried with military honors, and the living rejoiced over the victory. Larry Pritchard's night in the ranks brought him no worse disaster than an attack of rheumatism. Hugh Dallas, who had joined his command, was with the army, which he had no opportunity of leaving before the great day at Chancellorsville.

Bo Disney was one of those who, when the scare was over, and she found that none of her immediate friends had been killed, felt like expressing her gratitude by giving an entertainment. Bo was a Treasury clerk with barely enough to live on, and entertaining was a superfluity that nobody in similar circumstances would

dream of indulging in but Bo herself. She said she was nothing if not hospitable, and had no idea of losing her chances of entertaining angels unawares. Failing angels, men and women would do as well, probably better.

The Disney family consisted of Bo and her mother; their apartments, of two rooms in the attic of a shabby lodging-house; their larder, of such provisions as could be bought with a Treasury clerk's salary, which was constantly increasing in bulk and decreasing in value.

Bo contended that an entertainment consisted of two parts, the spiritual and the material, and anybody with a soul above buttons would agree that the former was the more important of the two. In fact, to use a material metaphor, the material bore to the spiritual the relation that a flagon does to wine. Wine was the chief thing, and if you could not get a flagon, it would taste almost as well out of a mug. Seats on silken sofas were all very well in their way, but as far as she was concerned, it was the person who sat beside her on the sofa that made all the difference between pleasure and boredom. Indeed, she had more than once been so happy sitting on a fence rail that she could not have told whether she was on earth or in heaven. So Bo, with her head on one side and her finger on her lips, stood in the doorway meditating how the thing was to be done.

The rooms, though shabby, were large and airy; too airy, in fact, for the scanty supply of fire in the grate.

"Mother, I have it!" she exclaimed, with sudden inspiration.

"What have you got now?" asked Mrs. Disney, a

delicate-looking woman, who, wrapped in shawls, *sat* near the fire patching a pair of old gray trousers.

"An idea!" warmly.

"You never lack for those, Bo."

"But this is a practical one."

"Ah, that is something new."

"You see I am anxious to inaugurate a salon."

"A salon?" glancing round the room. "Here, do you mean?"

"Yes, here. But please understand from the beginning that the glory of my salon, as of others, is to be the people, not the things."

"A salon?" repeated Mrs. Disney meditatively.

"It is plain where that idea comes from."

Bo flushed slightly.

"All my life, that is ever since I could read," she said, "I have been fascinated with the idea of having a salon of my own, if I could."

"Does M. St. Maur like salons?"

"I don't know; or rather, being French, I suppose he does."

"Don't you think you might wait for a more suitable time, until after the war, for example?"

"On the contrary, no time could be so suitable as the present. Salons thrive in times of intense excitement. Antagonism is the breath of their nostrils. It is in times like these that men and women feel the need of a common ground, where they can meet and express their real feelings about real things. Clothes, furniture, and fops are mere rubbish nowadays. In fact, they are always of small account, but it takes a conflagration to make people see them in their proper light."



Mrs. Disney yawned.

"Bo, you said you had an idea. It seems to me you have many."

"Nothing is so prolific as an idea, mamma. One always begets others."

"Apropos of salons, is that an epigram?"

"You may call it so, if you like. But now let us return to our muttuns."

"Yours, if you please."

"It is lucky we have a porch at the back."

Mrs. Disney looked up. It was impossible to follow Bo.

"Porch? Are you going to have a porch as well as a salon? Do you mean to play Zeno as well as Madame de Staël, and combine philosophy with epigrams?"

"Oh, no! I was only wondering what we could do for a pantry and a place to put our beds the night of the salon."

Mrs. Disney shivered.

"If you put our beds on the porch this weather, they will get so cold we shall not be able to sleep in them."

"I had not thought of that. But we can manage somehow. I think I can get your bed into the wardrobe. I suppose it does not matter about the bedstead's getting cold?"

"But what are you going to do with me? You can't shut me up in a wardrobe."

"You? Why, you are to be the chief ornament of the salon."

Mrs. Disney shrugged her shoulders and smiled. Youth and beauty had departed, but a compliment was a compliment still. She was faded, and her garments

were shabby, but something about her gave unmistakable evidence of former beauty, and a past in which patches had played no part.

"I think," said Bo, her brain still busy with plans, "I shall call my salon 'The Ephemeral.' A fleeting thing seems to have more fascination than a fixture."

"Heaven grant the name may prove appropriate," thought Mrs. Disney.

Invitations to Bo's Ephemeral were issued, and preparations made, in spite of a great deal of delicate satire on Mrs. Disney's part. The dingy walls of their apartment were made to look festive by hangings of flags of all kinds; in fact, whatever Bo could get hold of. Even star-spangled banners, not then in demand in Richmond, were made to do duty as background, while Confederate bunting with state and foreign flags were draped over the old colors, clouding the blue and blotting out the stars. Toilet arrangements and bedsteads were exiled to the Siberia of the back porch. Mrs. Disney's bed, after sundry bursting of bonds, was finally got under lock and key in a wardrobe. By lamplight, the effect of these and similar makeshifts was not bad. Bo counted upon the company doing the rest. The human, or what she called the spiritual, element of the affair was to be everything that could be desired. Patched carpets and invalid chairs would not be noticed.

Meanwhile, the invitations to the forthcoming Ephemeral created quite a buzz of curiosity and interest in society. Here at last was something new under the sun. Something which Solomon had not foreseen, and which took a Bo Disney to effect. It made one of two

prominent topics of conversation at a morning reception at the President's.

Mrs. President, who had been in retirement for some months, had signaled her return to society by general invitations to a morning reception, and everybody was there. A feature of the entertainment, and the other prominent topic of conversation, was a young Davis, who had made his *début* into life since his mother's last appearance, and on this occasion received with her.

Callers, having paid their respects to the head of the nation, were notified that they were expected to retire through an anteroom, where this latest scion of the presidential house, attended by a pretty nurse, and lying in a dainty silk-lined cradle, received homage with round-eyed simplicity. Here, in the limp passivity of a six weeks' existence and the glory of a christening frock, he smiled, when he was awake, with bland impartiality on all his visitors.

Boadicea, caught in the stream of retiring guests who were dividing their admiration between the mottled atom of humanity in the cradle and the cloud of lace and embroidery in which it was enveloped, found herself near Albion and Gaul.

"What a brave little man!" exclaimed St. Maur, apostrophizing the baby and the pretty nurse with polite effusion.

"Pshaw!" blurted the Englishman. "If the office of Confederate President were hereditary, one could understand having the boy — is it a boy? — here, instead of in the nursery."

"You English think too much of heredity," volunteered Bo. "Our democratic principle, that every man

must work out his own destiny, is better. Now this child will have an opportunity of achieving greatness, which is better than being *born* a president."

"Apropos," said Albion, ignoring the democratic idea, lowering his voice, and addressing himself directly to Bo, "speaking of a child and English heredity reminds me. Do you chance to know an English — or rather a Welsh — family here by the name of Pritchard, or, as it was formerly called, Ap Richard?"

"Do I chance to know them?" laughed Bo. "Why, they chance to be among my intimates."

"That is lucky," dropping his voice still lower, and getting Bo off into a corner. "Then you can tell me if it is true that they have recently taken into their house a — a" —

"What?" asked Bo, her eyes dancing with curiosity, expectation, and all kindred emotions.

"That is, have they recently adopted a child, a boy so to speak?"

"Yes, a boy so to speak, and a splendid specimen; but he is a profound mystery. What do you know about him?"

"Nothing, but I should like to find out something."

Here an influx of visitors to the baby show made further conversation impossible.

"Come to the Ephemeral, Tuesday," said Bo, as they were separated by the crowd. "Come early, and I will tell you what I know. The Ephemeral is for the discussion of vexed questions, big and little. Good-by."

If the mind is fully occupied with a subject, everything that happens seems to bear on that one thing.

Boadicea, coming from the reception, passed through the Capitol square, on her way back to her desk at the Treasury. There, in shadow of the Washington Monument, she stumbled upon St. Maur, who had escaped from the overcrowded reception when she went off into a corner with Albion. He was now occupied in chucking Jack, out in his Confederate overcoat, under the chin, while he talked animatedly with the child's pretty nurse, Mrs. Manning. He was apparently so interested in the conversation as not to perceive Bo until she was close upon them. The girl glanced impatiently at Washington, innocently caracoling on his bronze horse, with the indignant mental ejaculation, —

"You are the father of your country, and Jack, from the interest all the men take in him, would seem to be the son of his."

"Aha, mademoiselle!" exclaimed St. Maur, with his perfect smile and bow, when at last he perceived her. "You see I stopped a moment to caress the boy whom you sometimes caress. He is not the rose exactly, but" — shrugging his shoulders. "Good-by, little man."

With a final touch of Jack's dimpled chin, St. Maur with easy transition bestowed a glance equally tender on Bo's blushing cheek, and walked with her to the Treasury door.

"Did you have any particular reason for such animated talk with Mrs. Manning?" asked Bo, trying to appear playful while in dead earnest.

"Yes, a particular reason," with inscrutable gravity.

"I wonder what reason anybody can have for talk-

ing to that kind of person?" haughtily arranging bonnet strings.

"I will tell you some day. Ah, here we are a treadmill door, and I must go to mine. I hope department is as well-named as mine; we have a deal of war at the War Office. I hope it is all over with you. Au revoir."

## XIV.

### THE EPHEMERAL.

THE evening of the Ephemeral arrived, and the first guest who made his appearance was Albion.

"There's something in it," thought Bo, nodding wisely to herself, when she saw his bulky figure and florid face making their way upstairs.

Mrs. Disney, in consequence of her apartment being turned into a salon, was making a slow toilet in a borrowed dressing-room in a distant corner of the house. Bo was alone when Albion entered. He was not long in introducing his subject. After exchanging weather-words and admiring the flags on the walls, especially that of the lion and the unicorn, he plunged into the middle of things. "Well, Miss Disney, what about the Pritchard foundling?"

"What do you want to know? The color of his eyes?"

"Humph! That is the last thing. Is he healthy? Likely to live?"

"Splendid health. Live forever."

Albion looked at her sharply. Was she imitating him? Bo was perfectly grave.

"The Pritchards are rich, aren't they?"

"Considered so, very."

"Humph! Do you think they will adopt the boy, or is it a passing fancy?"

"Miss Pritchard seems very fond of him."

"Leave him her money, do you think?"

"Some of it, I suppose. Will you be glad?"

"Who — I?" ferociously.

"Yes, if you are so much interested in him."

"I am not the least interested in him. I am interested on the other side."

"The other side! I didn't know there was another side."

"Yes, yes. These Pritchards have nieces and nephews in Wales, friends of mine, not at all well-off. I think they have expectations from your friends. At any rate, they asked me to make some inquiries as to the heirs in America."

"And is *that* what you wanted to know?" in deep disappointment.

"Yes. What could you have supposed? What's the matter?"

"Only that here is the end of another wild-geese chase," sighed Bo. "Ah, here come some more people," leaving Albion staring and wondering what she meant.

People continued to come, and Bo's salon succeeded beyond her anticipation. Her rooms were well filled and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves. Even Mrs. Disney, in spite of her satire and forebodings rose to the occasion and was in brilliant spirits. She would not have confessed it, but society was her natural element, and for this one evening she felt she was in her dear world again. Carefully dressed in an old black silk which looked well enough by gaslight, and seated in the safest of the invalid armchairs, her deli-



cate, high-bred face was thrown into relief by a dark blue flag draped on the wall behind her. Bo thought she posed well as queen of a salon.

"You love music, Mrs. Disney?" said Madelaine, touched by the pale, worn face irradiated with pleasure by a song from a girl with a rich contralto voice.

"Love it?" with girlish enthusiasm. "Yes, nothing gives me such delight. Of all Solomon's glory I envy most his men singers and women singers. If I were rich and went in for luxuries, that's the kind of thing I'd have."

"Mamma does not know it, but she likes all the luxuries," said Bo, hovering near. "All day she has been devouring one of George Eliot's novels sent us through the lines."

"That's a doubtful luxury, Bo. The book is so dreadfully sad. If Burton had not been beforehand, were I George Eliot, I should call my novels 'The Anatomy of Melancholy.' It would describe them in four words, and save volumes of learned criticism on her scalpel and hopelessness."

"Mrs. Disney, you ought to write a novel yourself," said Madelaine.

"I shall never do that, but I should like to get the ear of the novelists."

"What would you ask them, mamma?" said Bo.

"I should ask them to have their characters set clear, like modern jewels, so that you can see all round them. To bury them in descriptions and explanations destroys their vitality just as the heavy old-fashioned settings dimmed the lustre of diamonds."

"I agree with you about descriptions. They are

very tiresome, especially descriptions of scenery," said Madelaine.

"Yes, unless the writer has the art of putting the scene before you at a glance, as nature does. I should n't care for the finest view if I had to take in each detail separately as in a book, and through such a clumsy medium as words."

"I think explanations of characters even worse," said Bo. "Which of us goes round with a glossary attached to translate everything we say and do into the vulgar tongue? It is one of the charms of life that we do not always understand our own motives and actions, much less other people's."

Here the conversation was interrupted by new arrivals, who claimed Mrs. Disney's attention.

"Madelaine!" said Bo, delighted that her mother entered so cordially into the spirit of the evening. "You know how to bring mamma out. You read people like books."

"Speaking of books," said Madelaine, "you read French books better than I do, and here comes your French friend, looking as fresh and crisp in evening dress as an *edition de luxe* just from the press."

"Yes, the clothes-press," said Bo, with heightened color, and the little depreciatory way in which she spoke of St. Maur.

"Why, what has become of you?" she said, in quite a different key when he reached her. "I have not seen you since — let me see, since" —

"Since the day on the Capitol square."

"Yes, when you seemed so much interested. By the bye, you promised to tell me" —

"My particular reason," enjoying her curiosity. "I played with Jack because he is a friend of yours. I talked with the nurse because" —

Bo's eyes were two brilliant interrogation points.

"Because she is a pretty woman."

"A *Frenchman's* reason!" said Bo, turning away in a pet. It was the second time this evening that she had discovered a mare's nest.

"*Mademoiselle*," said St. Maur following, and Bo halted.

Why is the unaccustomed more fascinating than the usual? Plain "Miss" would not have stayed her. St. Maur's "*Mademoiselle*" was lengthened sweetness, and Bo wanted to hear what came after.

"May I give you a word of counsel?" he asked, in the kindest fashion.

"Of course," mollified.

"If I were you," he said, standing before her with the gently deprecating air of one who anticipates a scolding for performing a duty, "I should ask no more concerning Jack. It may bring you an awkward answer some day."

Bo blushed painfully. She saw that St. Maur had reason. She did not know what to say. Twenty indignant answers presented themselves. Finally justice prevailed. With a grave "Thank you," she turned away. She had never liked St. Maur so well. As a proof, she never busied herself about Jack's origin again. The mystery should unfold without her help.

The evening wore on, and Bo looked round on her salon with unfeigned delight. Everywhere conversation was in full and easy flow. Her guests seemed to

have donned their best spirits and keenest wits for the occasion. Her salon was an accomplished fact. It was getting late when she thought of the refreshments, and how they were to be brought in from the back porch without disclosing the clumsiness of the arrangement. Finally, she hit upon the plan of getting the contralto to sing in the front room, which would draw everybody thither as honey attracts bees. Then she would close the doors between the two rooms and have in the slim repast before the song was over. This would have been a feasible plan, but, unfortunately for Bo, the tempting odor of sweets had been too much for a negro boy next door, who sniffed their tempting odor through the boards which separated his master's back porch from hers. He had climbed over into the latter at the peril of his bones, and was there found red-handed and red-mouthed with the spoils. He had made such havoc with the provender that there was not enough left for the Ephemeral. Besides stuffing himself, he had shared liberally with a comrade in the adjoining porch as hungry, if not so adventurous, as himself. The exasperated Bo brought him into the house with the intention of inflicting on him some terrible punishment, such as solitary confinement for the night, or a hint to his master that he deserved the rod. Under the gaslight, his pinched face and lank stomach softened her wrath. When the song was ended and the doors were thrown open, she announced, holding him by the collar between finger and thumb, her countenance half-way betwixt tragedy and comedy, —

“Ladies and gentlemen, here is, or are, I don't know which is grammatically correct, the refreshments.”

The boy, whose mouth was full, was so terrified that he could only full on his knees and sob, —

"De things smelt so good, I could n't help it. I was so hon-hongry."

The unexpected performance was greeted by laughter so general and good-humored that the culprit burst into tears of relief. He was evidently half-starved, and the company were glad on the whole that he had had a good meal. Giving up to others less well off had come to be such a condition of life that it was never a surprise and rarely a disappointment.

Albion, who had an English appetite, which like everything English is the best in the world and never fails to come to time, was disposed to grumble.

"The black imp deserves thirty-nine lashes."

"His excuse was a pretty old one," laughed St. Maur. "Very like the one Eve gave for eating the apple; it seemed so good for food."

"Yes, and a pretty mess she made of things!" growled Albion.

"Let us have a reel!" cried Bo, the boy having scrambled out of the room and performed the acrobatic feat of getting over the porch again; "we must have something in place of a supper."

"A reel instead of a meal, humph!" said Albion.

"Is a reel quite orthodox for a salon, Bo?" asked Mrs. Disney.

"It will do for an American variety. Exotics always change a little on transplanting," said Bo, getting the company into shape for a reel.

One luxury that Mrs. Disney had saved from her household wreck was a piano, and she needed no per-

suasion to fill up the awkward space made by the loss of refreshments with a reel.

She was so brilliant a performer as to lend to dance music an additional incentive. The quick notes fell from her fingers in sparkling showers, like the phosphorescent rain that sometimes follows the dip of oars. They set young blood in motion as the moon moves the tide. There formed in a moment a great circle of young men and women, whose lightly clasped hands and eager feet swayed and balanced to the rhythm of the tune. Lissom girls, with heightened color and beaming eyes, kept step and pulse beat with strong-limbed young men, who danced with their might.

St. Maur, who had never taken part in anything so unconventional, stood in a doorway near the head of the hall stairs, looking on. He watched Bo's movements with his near-sighted trick of half-closed eyes, which concentrated their fire, and made them seem to Bo to shine like tropical stars. She was under their subtle influence, as with flying feet she went through the figures of the dance. She never looked at him, and yet never lost sight of him. She felt and danced like a winged creature. In the perfection of physical vigor and activity, with as little sense of fatigue as a disembodied spirit, life seemed at its best under the spell of those admiring eyes. Once she perceived that their attention was diverted from her. A man she had never seen before came up the hall stairs, and touching St. Maur on the shoulder said a few words to him. She felt rather than saw his countenance change; a cloud passed over the tropical stars.

The ring of dancers whirled round and round to the

rollicking music like an eddy of leaves in a high wind. St. Maur, watching his opportunity, laid his hand on the arm of one of the young men rushing swiftly past.

The dancer, in the wildest spirits, flushed and breathless, at once dropped out of the ring, which closed up and whirled on. The vigilant Bo saw him snatch up his cap and plunge downstairs more eagerly than he had danced. St. Maur shifted his position. It was not long before another man had gone the same way. One by one the masculine element of the salon was eliminated, until the depletion was so great as to be noticeable. Then a hush fell on all spirits. Everybody felt that this meant something, although a panic had been admirably avoided. The music ceased. The reel broke up into knots of anxious-eyed girls. At last, Albion was the only man left. He gnawed his mustache, and looked very much out of humor at the turn things had taken.

"Where have all the men gone? What has happened?" asked Mrs. Disney, trying not to look frightened.

"Another demonstration on Richmond, I suppose," said Albion. "Jeb Stuart has taught the enemy to make raids, and we shall never have any peace with 'those people' swooping down on the town."

"I think we disposed of 'those people' very summarily last time," with spirit.

"Yes, yes; it is n't that they do so much damage," Albion hastened to say, "but that they upset one's nerves. Nothing, not even a salon, comes to a natural conclusion. Everything," waving his hand round the manless room, "ends in a dissolving view."

## XV.

### ALAS, POOR GHOST!

THE feminine portion of the salon found its way home that night as best it could without masculine escort. Bands of girls hurried through the streets like pretty flocks without shepherds. The town was greatly astir. Old men with obsolete muskets were coming out of their houses with the trembling gait of age. Boys, shouldering what firearms they could procure, shouted with delight as they marched away, feeling they too were going like Marlbrook to the wars.

Albion's conjecture had been correct. A raiding-party of the enemy, more adventurous than the first, had penetrated still nearer the town, and were even now having a sharp encounter with Confederates at Laburnum, not two miles away. Very few people went to bed that night. Every available white man armed for the emergency. Every woman made ready to become a nurse at a moment's notice. Ambulances were in motion, and now and again wounded men were brought in from the field. The ghastly scenes of dead and dying were begun over again.

Mrs. Key, who had been present at the salon only to please her friends, the Disneys, remained a short time, and went home early. Unlike most young people of the period, she had no desire for gayety. Any effort



in that direction made it all the more difficult to preserve an equable cheerfulness. To others, it was evidently a relaxation, but she could never lose sight of the incongruity of gayety with war. She looked particularly well that evening. Her dress had some attempt at ornament in compliment to Bo's festivity. Her throat and wrists shone white as milk through meshes of gauze that edged her black gown. Her hair was arranged with its usual simplicity but for a turn which brought it as a sort of coronal above her low brow. She gave her own expression to dress, and these few touches sufficed to make it distinguished above others. As she crossed the room to leave the salon, Albion ejaculated under his breath to Gaul, "Jove! How she walks!"

"Who? where?" stammered St. Maur, whose eyes were in the other room furtively following a dancing figure.

"Why, Mrs. Key. She's gone now. I suppose there have been women who walked well since the time of Eve, but I have never seen a finer gait. Firm and majestic below the waist, lithe and supple above."

"That is true," agreed St. Maur, recapturing his eyes and thoughts. "By the way, most American women wriggle, and, if you will pardon me, English women are apt to stalk."

"Humph!" grunted Albion, "what about French women?"

"Speaking of Mrs. Key," continued St. Maur, ignoring his countrywomen, "she always reminds me of the magnolia, or some superb white flower, the very fineness of whose texture suggests delightful fragrance."

"Gad! Gaul, you are poetical."

Madelaine was glad to get away from the music and dancing. She had felt all day a sense of foreboding more oppressive than the usual expectant anxiety. On her way home, she observed the growing commotion in the streets. The uneasy excitement of the people found an echo in her heart. With a vague feeling of general unrest, she was conscious of a definite object of anxiety. She had been thinking all day of Hugh Dallas. She thought much of him at all times, but this day his memory haunted her with the gentle persistence of a grieved wraith.

Madelaine's sentiments towards Hugh were peculiar. She loved him loyally and well, although she never disguised from herself that her love was of the quality of friendship, — supreme friendship, if you will, but still friendship. This did not make her allegiance less strong and tender. A passionate regret that she could not love him as he deserved made it more so. She felt that she was as much his as if the prevented marriage had taken place. A sense of deficiency in one respect made her loyalty the strongest and most delicate sentiment. To be so loved was worth the utmost passion of most women. The genuineness of her affection saved her from supposing that she wronged Dallas. She believed that she gave him all the affection of which she was capable; that it was impossible for her to love as she had once loved.

When she got home that night, she found that her aunt and all the servants except Daniel had gone to bed before the alarm. Larry was out with the reserves again. Madelaine decided to let her aunt sleep while

she kept watch. She intended to change her dress for a working one, but while she stood before the parlor fire, cloak and hood over her arm, she was startled by a scuffling noise at the front door. Before she could conjecture what it meant, the parlor door opened and a man stumbled in. He staggered, swayed, and fell at her feet. Behind him on the threshold stood Daniel, from whom the man had broken away, and the negro's face was gray with consternation. The poor fellow who had fallen, a soldier whose shabby gray uniform bore the chevrons of a captain, was not drunk, but apparently dying. Dallas was so vividly in Madelaine's thoughts that for a moment she felt that this must be he, come in the flesh to answer for his spiritual presence which had haunted her all day. A glance sufficed to show an altogether different man. The line of beauty is always beautiful; and there are some gracious forms and faces in which beauty is as inherent and indisputable. There are no two opinions about the beauty of the Apollo, and there could be no disagreement as to that of the man who lay at Madelaine's feet, — Madelaine, whose soul responded to beauty as her eyes to light, her lungs to air!

Had the man been ugly as sin, the lowliest private in the service, he would have had her pity and loving care not only for his own and his country's sake, but for the sake of Dallas and her brothers, who might even now be in like need. But beauty makes its own strenuous appeal. The young soldier, whose strong-limbed body lay prone like a lusty tree cut down in its vigor, his perfect face emptied of the hues of life, his curly head turned aside, consenting to death, gave

her agonizing dread lest it might be too late to help him.

She did not stop to question Daniel, but knelt down by the young man's side and put her face close to his, to discover if there was still breath in his nostrils.

"Thank God!" burst from her lips like a great *Te Deum*, as a faint respiration brushed her cheek. "He is not dead, Daniel!" she cried joyfully to the negro, who was now gently removing the shoes from the blistered, blood-stained feet. Madelaine loosened his coat, and placed a cushion under his head. The movement caused him to open his eyes. He had blue eyes. Their expression, as they met Madelaine's, was curiously wistful, — a half-bewildered expression, made distinctly intelligent for a moment by a look of pleading. It sent a long-unaccustomed thrill through Madelaine's heart. Then his eyes closed again.

"Daniel," cried Mrs. Key, frightened by his deathly paleness, "we must give him brandy and get him to bed."

Daniel nodded wisely and continuously, like a mandarin. He knew all about nursing soldiers, and this one needed "a heap o' nussin'."

As Madelaine poured out brandy under a lamp, the light struck sharply on her new ring, the one Hugh had placed on her finger. It was like the glance of reproachful eyes. It brought back, with a throb of pain, the memory of Hugh himself. He had gone completely out of her thoughts, — thoughts still agitated by the stranger's blue eyes. Was it for this that, with prophetic sadness, Hugh had haunted her memory all day? Nonsense! There was nothing like the con-

tinued anxieties of war to make a woman morbid. With a movement of compunction, she pressed a kiss on the ring on her left hand, while with her right she held the glass to the stranger's pale lips.

Daniel was a powerful negro, six feet two, big and brawny, — a black Hercules. He was also an ideal nurse, as gentle and soft-tongued as he was strong. It taxed his strength to get the dead weight of the unconscious man upstairs, but no nursing mother could have handled her charge more tenderly.

"In dar?" he asked, as he paused, panting and shiny, before a door on the first floor, which Madelaine opened.

"Yes, this room has the sun. He will do better here," going before and turning down the fresh covers of a great, white, plummy bed.

## XVI.

### A COMPLICATION.

IT soon became known that the stranger's illness, whatever its beginning, had resulted in typhoid fever, and that a long, if not fatal, illness was before him. Everything that could be found out about him, until he was in a condition to speak for himself, was discovered the night of his coming.

His name and rank, "John Hardwick, Capt. 23d Georgia Infantry, Augusta, Georgia," was written in his military cap, and on some papers found in his pocket.

Daniel, who had been the first to see him, described the meeting to Mrs. Key.

"Miss Madlin, he was foteded inter town in a amberlance fum out yonder whar de fightin' is. Dar was anoder soldier along dat was shot froo de lungs. Dey was on dar way to de horsepitle. De driver 'lowed he could n't keep dis one in de amberlance 'cos he was out o' his hade an' powerful strong. He wanted to git out at ebery cornder, an' when he got to dis cornder, nothin' would keep him in. De driver say as how he could n't stop to fool wid him, 'cos de oder soldier was a-bleedin' to death. I foun' dis one staggerin' roun' on de pabement jes' as de driver was gwine off. I seed he was a ill man, an' I holped him in here. He wanted to fight me, too."

"I am glad you took care of him, Daniel. You are always good to the soldiers."

Next morning, Miss Patty was astonished and even mortified to learn that she had slept through an alarm like that of the preceding night. It seemed incredible that a skirmish, in which "those people" had been again repulsed, could have taken place on the very outskirts of Richmond without her knowledge.

The skirmish having taken place, the advent of a disabled soldier was not so surprising. More than one disabled soldier had been nursed back to a fighting condition under her roof. They were, every one, dear, interesting fellows, according to Miss Patty. But this one was by long odds the dearest, most interesting of them all. He was so good-looking!

In due course of time came answers to inquiries dispatched to Georgia, bringing Hardwick's credentials in the shape of grateful letters from his mother and sisters, commending him to the kindness of the friends among whom he had found a home. A letter from the Colonel of his regiment gave unstinted praise of his qualities as gentleman and officer. All this, with the illness in which he hovered long between life and death, with the apparent chances heavily on the side of the latter, made him for a time the chief object of interest in the Pritchard household. Little Jack Horner had a rival near his throne.

That first night, after a hasty visit from an over-worked army surgeon, Mrs. Key and Daniel watched by Hardwick's bedside with little hope that he would live to see morning. At long intervals, he would open his eyes for a moment with seeming consciousness, and

they always rested on Madelaine's face with the pleading look which had so stirred her in the beginning. No expression of the human countenance is so touching as its look of dumb entreaty when the tongue has lost its power. The wistful eyes may be asking only for a cup of cold water, but the impossibility of making themselves understood is unspeakably pathetic. Madelaine could scarcely keep back the blinding tears as she hung over the sufferer, trying to grasp the significance of what his eyes strove so hard to say.

Was it gratitude, or a message for home, or some deeper question of the spirit, or all these that so charged them with meaning that the man's soul seemed to be burning in his eyes? Madelaine trembled, lest the soul should escape with its message unspoken.

In the watches of that night, she learned every line of Hardwick's face. Its strong contour, its delicate touches, the firm lips and sad eyes, were imprinted on her memory, never to be effaced. In the days and weeks that followed, she came to look for a glance from the sad blue eyes as her reward for unceasing care and anxiety. An occasional look of intelligence was like a gleam of hope in the long, blank hours of wasting fever. The big sunny room which Madelaine had given up to his use was the scene of a great struggle for life. Typhoid fever, whose fluctuations demand ceaseless watchfulness, was never better tended.

Hardwick had youth and a good clean constitution on his side. Shoulder to shoulder with these, Miss Patty, Madelaine, two doctors, and Daniel fought against death. In the end, they conquered. When the fever left him, he had been plucked from such nearness to



the grave that his nurses rejoiced as if a new man had been born into the world.

Madelaine was so untiring a nurse that Miss Patty was afraid, in the beginning, that her health would suffer. But so far from being injured by contact with the disease, Madelaine seemed to have imbibed some new elixir of life for the emergency. The sadness which shadowed her young widowhood was merged in absorbing interest in the hand-to-hand fight for the life of another. The Madelaine of girlish days came back with even richer fruition than her early promise. In spite of tireless activity and long vigils, she was fresher and handsomer than ever. Her eyes, once clouded with introspective grief, shone with a softer light. Richer hues came and went in her cheek. Her figure was rounder, her steps more elastic. Being withdrawn from a morbid contemplation of her own sorrows developed her in every way. The very touch of her hand seemed magnetic and healing.

"Why, Madelaine!" said Bo, one day, "I never saw nursing agree with any one as it does with you. You look more blooming every day."

"I have found my vocation at last," said Madelaine. "I think of putting on a white cap and becoming a regular hospital nurse."

"Besides the cap, Madelaine, I should advise you to put on a veil, or you will do your patients more harm than good."

"You know I don't like levity, Bo."

The doctors appreciated such vitality in a sick room. They acknowledged that Mrs. Key's nursing was better than any medicine man could devise.

It was evident that her patient felt her influence in every fibre. However restless he might be when she was away, her return brought calm.

Man, at best, is greatly governed by his sympathies and antipathies. He is altogether under their dominion when, as in illness, his reason is dormant and his will prostrate. His nerves, senses, and emotions are then paramount, and his greatest need is an attendant in accord with these.

Madelaine seemed to bring healing into Hardwick's room when she came. This being the case, Miss Patty, with other sick and wounded to look after, was glad to leave her to watch the fluctuations of the fever. For a time, this was all that could be done for the patient, who seemed to be fighting shadows in a land of shadows. Finally, he came back to life and the things of sense.

Broth began to take an important place in his existence. The wide, fresh bed in which he found himself was an unspeakable luxury. The cosy room, with softly tempered light, was Paradise to the weary, storm-beaten soldier. To the carnage, smoke, and din of battle had succeeded the ministrations of gentle hands, soft voices, and noiseless footfalls. He did not understand what it meant; he accepted it without attempting to reason about it. He was much too weak to reason or even to think. He lay back on his delightful bed, and let things evolve.

If a great, black, shiny giant at one moment straightened his pillow, and the next was transformed into a lovely lady with the whitest hands, who offered him nectar to drink, what concern was it of his except to

enjoy it? He slept a great deal, and the border land between sleeping and waking was neutral ground, where facts and fancies met as equals. With the pertinacity of a mind weakened by fever, his thoughts constantly reverted to one object, which was not the black giant nor the lesser figures that crowded his dreams, sleeping and waking, but the lady with the white hands.

One day, Mrs. Key, sitting in his room writing letters while he slept, was startled by the question in feeble, but perfectly cool, rational tones, —

“Will you be so good as to tell me where I am?”

She looked up and found Hardwick awake, regarding her as if she were a new specimen.

Wasted to a shadow, weak as a nursling, he lay back among his pillows, a wreck of his former self. Out of the wreck, his great blue eyes survived in their original beauty. No longer troubled by pain or clouded by fever, they were clear as an infant's, and speculative as those of a man finding himself helpless in a strange place.

The object which arrested their attention now was not of the fabric of a vision, but a wholesome entity, the charming figure of a young woman of most real flesh and blood, with a face fresh as Hygeia's.

“You are at a friend's house,” said Madelaine, as quietly as if they were in the middle of a conversation.

“A friend's?” remaining silent for a while to digest that suggestion; then, “Is the fight over?”

“Yes.”

“Have I been here all night?”

“Yes.”

Silence for a while.

"How long have I been here?"

Madelaine looked at her watch, and rang for broth.

"Do you know you have asked four questions, and you are limited to three?"

In spite of an indulgent smile, her voice was so restraining that Hardwick did not dare to ask who had limited him, although he wanted very much to know.

After this, he began to get better. Then one day after dinner, Madelaine, who usually gave him his dessert, brought him a letter postmarked Augusta, Ga.

She had never called him by his name. Hitherto there had been no need. Now that he was getting to be himself, she thought it was time to give him his name and rank. This was a good opportunity. Playfully reading his address from the letter, she said with a smile and nod, —

"Captain Hardwick."

Instead of an answering smile, he looked greatly startled. Madelaine thought he was going to faint.

She accused herself of stupidity. She ought to have known that in his condition anything sudden would be discomposing, even so slight a thing as springing his own name upon him for the first time. How was he to know that she knew his name? She tried to retrieve her mistake.

"Forgive me. I have startled you," she said soothingly, while she moistened his lips with brandy; "but I have brought you something nice, something I think you will like to have, the best dessert in the world, — a letter from home."

He kept his troubled eyes on her face, while she

spoke comfortingly as a mother to a sick child. He put out his wan hand for the letter, but he did not rally. He shivered, and sank back with closed eyes and ashen lips.

The letter lay unopened by him for a long time. Madelaine wondered if there was some domestic trouble, such as so often makes letters from home a source of anxiety rather than pleasure. This incident made it plain that he was in no condition to rejoin his regiment, which he spoke of doing, when he spoke at all, every day.

The truth was that having recovered so far as to understand the situation and note what was going on around him, he seemed to stop there. An apparent want of will-power prevented his recovering as rapidly as his youth and constitution warranted.

Once, when the doctors, who had attended him assiduously in the beginning, and now came once in a while to see how he was getting on, were leaving the house, Miss Patty said, "We can never get Captain Hardwick well unless we can cheer him up, doctor. I can't think what makes him so sad."

The doctors exchanged a glance. Madelaine, who was present, saw, and wondered with a sinking heart what it meant. It was so gravely significant as to mean something serious. Were they concealing anything? Would Hardwick not recover? Did his melancholy mean insanity?

The elder of the men, seeing Madelaine intercept the glance, said in a quiet, professional way, —

"You know it is a feature of the disease. I've known men to die of starvation simply from being too

spiritless to eat. You must keep up his appetite and his spirits too. Medicine can do nothing more for him."

"But you are not going to desert him, doctor?" said Miss Patty,

"Certainly not. It's a very interesting case," said the elder.

"Yes, in some respects the first that has come under my observation. I shall not lose sight of him," promised the other.

Dejected as Hardwick continued to be, some things interested him more than others. Daniel, the black Hercules, and Afra, the cook, sometimes made him smile. His face softened at sight of Jack. His eyes followed Madelaine as starved birds follow a ship. It was a foregone conclusion that he should love her. Her influence, beginning when he was unconscious, increasing through the long days when he was struggling back to life and reason, and growing stronger every hour that he saw her face and heard her voice, had ended by steeping his senses and his soul in love. His soul, born anew by nearness to another world, his senses, rekindled by returning health, were fresh and strong for suffering as for passion. His unhappiness was commensurate with his love. Mrs. Key could not always ignore the language of his eyes. They waited on her movements with hopeless devotion, and there came a day when she understood that they burned with another sentiment than gratitude. She could not ignore the sentiment, but it was laid upon her to discourage it. His condition was now such that he rarely needed more than a servant's care, and by exchanging

duties with Miss Patty she gradually withdrew her attendance. But the pain with which his eyes thrilled her lingered as the sting of the honey bee when the dart is extracted.

She wrote often to Dallas at this time, giving him news of events at the capital, telling him of her home life, the young Georgian and the progress of his illness, Jack's growth in size and beauty, in fact everything that could enliven the monotony of camp life. Every day she received from him a few lines of love and gratitude.

It was about this time, too, that she began to take Jack with her on the rare occasions when she went to see Hardwick. The boy's bubbling spirits interested him more than anything, except Madelaine herself, and interest of the lighter sort was what he most needed.

"Miss Madlin, dat ar baby is better physic for a man what's low down dan carster oil," had been Daniel's prescription.

One day when Madelaine was leaving Hardwick's room, he ventured to say, —

"Mrs. Key, you do not come to see me often now."

"You are getting on so well, you do not need a nurse," she answered cheerfully.

"Am I getting on well?" wearily; "then it's time for me to be getting back to the army."

"Oh, not well enough for that," quickly.

"A half well man will do for food for powder."

"It takes a wholly well man for forced marches and bivouacking," decisively.

Hardwick, to whom her word was sweetest law, was silent.

"Must you go away now?" he asked presently, with the appealing expression in his eyes which always moved her. It reminded her of the look of a child deprecating merited punishment, and she thought how hard it would be to punish a creature with such eyes.

"Yes, I must be going," looking at her watch. "I have an engagement presently."

"Before you go may I ask you a favor?" flushing with earnestness.

"You ought to be sure of that."

"It is to ask you to listen while I tell you something, and to forgive me if I grieve you," he continued, with burning eyes and a feverish spot on either cheek.

"You had better wait until you are stronger," said Madelaine, in great trouble.

"I shall be stronger when I have said it," he pleaded. "The effort not to speak is more wasting than fever."

"But" — entreated Madelaine.

"I know I shall die if I keep it back any longer. It fills my heart to bursting and rushes to my lips whenever I see you" —

"But" —

"I must tell you I love you. I don't know how else to express the mighty thing beating here. Words are so poor, but I love you."

"Why do you tell me this?" freezingly, at a disadvantage with the poor fellow in whose overwrought condition feeling went before judgment.

"Because I can't help it. I do not ask, I do not dare to hope, for any return, but it's the one need of my life to tell you."



Hardwick seemed to have a new soul infused into him. His weakness disappeared while he told his love in clear, vibrant tones, with radiant eyes and glowing cheeks.

Madelaine did not dare to look at him. His voice made her tremble. She could not meet his eyes. The sight of his face transformed would have broken the curb with which she held herself. She looked at Jack playing on the floor, she fingered the ring which was to have been her wedding ring, as she answered in tones chilled by self-restraint, —

“You know it is not right that I should listen to you,” indicating by an involuntary movement Dallas’s ring.

The blood left Hardwick’s face, his eyes dilated.

“My God! Mrs. Key, are you not — are you not — Was it part of my delirium to believe that you were a widow?”

Madelaine flushed crimson.

The unexpectedness of the question forced from her a cry of pain.

“No, it is true. I am that unhappy, perjured creature, a widow engaged to be married!”

The cry unburdened her heart of its secret. Her engagement was a bondage. The next moment, she would have given worlds to recall her words.

Hardwick’s countenance changed. An indescribable look, like a shimmer of light on a snow wreath, brightened his pallid face, sunning over at the corners of eyes and lips. His glance met hers. It surprised her thought unclothed as an infant Love, intelligible as nature’s alphabet. Their eyes lingered on one another’s

for a moment. Madelaine's had never been so unguarded. They poured happiness into Hardwick's bosom, pressed down, running over. Crimson with consciousness and trembling like a culprit she took Jack in her arms.

"Good-morning, Captain Hardwick, we will forget what has happened to-day," she said coldly; and he knew that she would not come again.

As the door closed behind her, it was as a blank wall raised between him and hope.

## XVII.

### BREAD VERSUS SENTIMENT.

THE day after the Ephemeral brought a misfortune to Boadicea, — a misfortune long held at bay, and so grave as to terrify her for the consequences. Little accustomed to writing before the war, signing notes steadily for several hours every day resulted with her, as with not a few others, in scrivener's paralysis.

It had been long coming, but she would not, she said she could not, heed the warning and take rest. Her daily bread depended on her salary as a Treasury clerk. Poor Bo had suffered through all the stages of swelled joints, inflammation, intense pain, and numbness without complaint. But the tears came when the pen fell from her hand, and she found she could not write a stroke.

"My God! what is to become of us?" she thought, remembering her mother, as she looked down on her helpless hand and half her package of notes unsigned. She gulped down her tears, and, complaining of not feeling well, asked permission of the chief clerk to go home. He looked after her keenly as she turned away from his desk. He wondered what could have happened. No mere headache could have so changed her. She looked as men look when they have received sentence of death, — life and its hopes put aside. To

Boadicea, it seemed worse than death. To her, inability to work meant beggary. She hid the extent of the trouble from her mother for that day. Mrs. Disney had found much pleasure in the salon. Bo, believing she would have no more pleasures, carried off the occasion with spirit. Besides, she wanted to accustom herself to her paralyzed fingers and think what was to be done, before breaking the news to her mother.

It was hard to give her a stab while her eyes shone with something of the old light.

"Home so early? I hope nothing is the matter," said Mrs. Disney cheerily.

"Yes, my paw is knocked up again. But you know it has been pretty bad before," said Bo, holding her hand under a cold water faucet. "I'm giving it a douche, and it will be all right — after a while."

Then, catching a glimpse of herself in a mirror, she plunged her face in the basin and brought it up dripping, to account for her quivering lips and brimming eyes.

"I'm afraid you worked too hard over our salon yesterday," said her mother.

"No, it's those blasted old treasury notes," answered Bo, remarking that her mother called the salon "our," and trying to smile.

There was one person from whom she did not hide the matter so well. St. Maur came in the evening and brought her some flowers. Bo received him in the dingy closet the people of the house called a sitting-room, although nobody ever sat there if it could be avoided. It was a small, stuffy place, furnished with horsehair sofa and chairs, lighted with one smoke-

stained lamp, and decorated with bad prints, calculated to make a man swear, hung lopsided on the walls. Its ugliness always made St. Maur shudder.

Luckily for Bo, it was empty now. She came in wrapped in a gray shawl, her disabled hand hid in its folds. Her face was almost as colorless as the shawl, its brightness washed out as with a wet sponge. Her eyes were dark pools of standing water, her mouth as pitiful as a sobbing child's. She had often looked prettier, never more lovable.

St. Maur was startled by her haggard countenance, its utter misery emphasized by an attempt to smile.

"You suffer?" he said, in a tone which brought an overflow of tears. Speaking English, he used the fewest possible words, their quality more than compensating for quantity. His intonation expressed more interest and sympathy than a vocabulary.

"You suffer?"

"A little," taking his flowers in her left hand and hiding her brimming eyes in them.

"A little! Why, your dear face is all clouds and rain."

"Everything is all clouds, and it never rains but it pours," wiping her eyes and trying to smile.

"Yesterday it was all sunshine. What has happened?"

"The worst that can happen," throwing herself on the hard sofa in deep dejection.

"The worst? Ah! that is not kind, seeing I am here."

Bo smiled, in spite of herself. "You cannot help in this matter. It is one of bread, not sentiment."

St. Maur shrugged his shoulders. "True, I have not too much bread. Did the baker fail to-day?"

"It is not the bread-maker but the bread-winner who failed to-day," sobbed Bo, impressed by her own tragic statement.

"Dear child!" with suffused eyes. "What can you mean? Are you ill?"

Bo shook her head.

"One of your friends hurt in the raid last night?"

"No."

"Have you lost your place in the department?"

"Worse than that, for there are more departments than one I might try for."

"Do not tease me," he cried, impatient with anxiety.

"Tell me at once what has happened."

"I have lost" — sob.

"Your mother?"

Bo dried her eyes and looked up, sobered. "No, not so bad as that, thank God."

"What have you lost?"

With an expression of dumb pain in her eyes like that of some wounded animal, she held up her hand with its nerveless fingers.

"I have lost the use of that; and — and I have but one right hand," burying her face in the arm of the sofa and sobbing outright.

St. Maur's brow contracted with a look of anguish.

He was a man of pleasure, constitutionally opposed to tragedy. To his credit, he liked it less for others than for himself. Though light and emotional, he was thoroughly amiable. He could weep with a friend, but he was scarcely a helpmeet. No longer very young, he

had hitherto escaped the responsibilities of life. He bore to human nature's daily food more the part of flowers that decorate the feast, than the *pièce de résistance* upon which one relies for sustenance. Nobody blamed him for this. To look at him was to understand his character. Handsome, good-humored, and well-bred, he was a man to charm society, not to found a house or storm a breach. But the flowers that deck our tables may, under pressure, distill properties potent for life and death; so a man's capabilities may never be known even to himself until submitted to a crucial test. Nothing was farther from St. Maur's intention than marrying. It had been so in great prosperity; it was more so now that he had nothing beyond a salary as clerk in the War Department. Marriage was in direct opposition to his theories of life. He had evaded the entanglement an hundred times, for he found favor with women.

But at this moment Bo's pitiful cry, "I have but one right hand!" stirred him out of himself. It awakened the long slumbering, passionate chivalry of his race.

"Bo-a-di-cea," he said, in a low-breathed tone. His utterance of her name, charged with French accent and fire, thrilled her to the tips of her numbed fingers. She left off sobbing, to listen.

She raised her head and looked at him with shining eyes and parted lips, to drink in the music of her name.

He took her disabled hand in his. "*Chérie*, you have two right hands. While mine has life, it is for you." His tenderness touched the very fountain of

tears. The words were simple enough. The grace and devotion with which they were spoken belonged only to a Frenchman. So might a St. Maur of the old régime have dedicated his sword hand to his sovereign. Bo forgot that starvation stared her in the face. In spite of her tears, she was conscious only of happiness that flooded her senses like Danaë's shower of gold. It was the supreme moment of her life. In it she tasted the fullness of human happiness, but it was only for a moment. Then she withdrew her hand, which had lingered in his. She felt that her weakness had brought about a horrible dilemma.

"That is not the right way to state it," she said, trying to look cheerful, while her voice trembled with the agony of renunciation. "It would be only one hand between us."

"What matters, if one is enough?"

"If? But one is not enough."

"*Chérie*, you are mercenary."

"God knows, it is not for myself. I told you my trouble was a matter of bread. This war has murdered sentiment. Don't you suppose I know how many meals a day a War clerk earns, or rather how few? They used to be three, then two, now only one and a half."

"They can be divided, dear, if you will share them with me. Love will make up the difference."

"You know," she went on, not heeding his interruption, "you go to bed hungry every night."

"I forget it, dreaming of you."

A blush, wild and quick as prairie fire, overspread Bo's face and neck.



"You must not dream of me," she stammered, shrinking away from him.

"I cannot help it."

"You — you and I must part."

"Why, if you love me?"

"Because — *because* I love you," making her confession boldly.

He caught both her hands in his. "If you love me," he cried, "nothing shall part us. We will share our crusts together."

She was subjugated for a moment. It seemed so easy to be happy, she was so happy with her hands in his. But she drew them away. She went and stood by the fireplace. She felt stronger away from him.

"We must say good-by, dear," swallowing her tears.

"Are you going to send me away like this?"

"Don't make it harder."

"If you will not marry me, why will you not let me be your friend as before?"

"You must always be my friend, but not as before. It is different now."

"It is the same for me. I loved you then as now."

"But we had not spoken of love between us. The barriers are broken down. Knowing that you love me, I know — I know I should marry you, I could n't help it."

St. Maur laughed bitterly. He scolded and entreated to no purpose, Bo remained firm.

"But what are you going to do?" he asked, in despair.

"God knows."

## XVIII.

### BAFFLED.

MISS PATTY, coming home early one morning from a hospital visit, confronted before her door a man whom she had seen hanging round the house for several days. She was glad of an opportunity to speak to him. He was a rough-looking creature, whose appearance impressed her as that of a possible burglar. She felt some timidity in addressing a person of that class, but like most courageous people, the more she was afraid the more she persevered. She stopped directly in front of the man, who, thus thrown off his guard, looked the more dismayed of the two. He took off his hat, rubbed his unkempt hair, and disembarassed himself of a quid of tobacco by way of salutation. Miss Patty thought that near he did not seem quite such a ruffian as his appearance and suspicious actions indicated.

"I've seen you loitering in the neighborhood the last day or two. Do you want anything? Can I do anything for you?"

Her manner, though distinctly disapproving, was so temperate that the man, who had summoned his gruffest air, was disarmed. He looked at her steadily before answering, then, apparently satisfied with her countenance, he said guardedly, —

"You *kin* do something for me, if you want to."

"If I can do you any right service, I will. But your prowling idly about in this way looks very suspicious."

"Thar 's a heap o' suspicious-lookin' things nowadays," he said pointedly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that from Jeff Davis down, folks that call themselves good Confederits have spies and traitors in thar employ."

Miss Patty's heart gave a great thump. She remembered with a pang the trouble Mrs. Manning had gone through, and wondered if it had come up again. The poor little woman who had lately been more than ever shrinking and self-effacing!

"What business is it of yours if they have?" burst from her without reflection. "Is it your business to spy on good Confederates?"

"It's every man's business to expose spies and traitors," he said doggedly. "Besides," screwing up his shrewd greenish eyes and giving another rub to his shock of hay-colored hair, "a po' man earns a reward for findin' the men an' women that give information to the Yankees."

Miss Patty, pale as death, looked round to see if they were observed.

"Come into the house," she said hurriedly. "We can't discuss this matter here. A whisper like this might bring death to an innocent person."

The man chuckled. He desired nothing better than to get into the house.

"I'm what you call a blockade runner," he said, when Miss Patty had him closeted in her sitting-room,

"an' in my business between north and south, I come across a heap o' strange things."

"Yes, yes; but have you come across anything that would make my house an object of suspicion?" asked the old lady hotly.

"Befo' I answer that question, will you tell me somethin'?"

"That depends upon what the something is," impatiently.

"If you was sho' you had a Yankee spy in yo' house, would you give him or her, as it happened, up to justice?"

Miss Patty turned hot and cold, but she answered without hesitation.

"If I was *sure*, yes."

"All right, then, I b'lieve you. Some time ago, I was bringin' an odd lot of things from folks on the other side of the blockade to thar friends on this, an' I foun' among 'em a letter from a Yankee to a woman in Richmond, thankin' her for vallible information an' askin' for mo'. How's that?"

"That's very bad; but I don't see what I've got to do with it. And the Yankee was very imprudent to send such a letter by you. It might cost the woman her liberty or her life."

"Bless yo' heart, the letter was done up in a piece o' sweet-scented soap, that looked so innercent, I'd never a' known thar was anything in it but for an accident."

"But what has all this got to do with your hanging around my house?" sharply.

The man chuckled again.

"I've been more 'n a month tracking that letter

to yo' house," taking out a great leaf of tobacco and biting off a mouthful. "I don't b'lieve you 've got anything to do with it, but I think you must be mighty easy imposed on, 'cos the woman you 've got here 's been suspected befo'. I foun' that out fum the people she lived with befo' she came here. The soap was d'rected to her at thar house."

Miss Patty's heart went down into her shoes, or would have done so, but that according to a not unusual combination in Virginia her shoes were very small and her heart very big. The heart overflowed in a tide that reddened her cheeks.

"Is the woman white?" she asked, gaining time.

"Of cose. Niggers ain't much at writin', an' they ain't cute enough for a sweet-scented-soap dodge," with a gruff laugh.

"I 've only one white woman in my service," continued Miss Patty slowly, racking her brain as to what was best to do, more agitated that she thought she heard Jack at the Gallic cock business somewhere near. "I think I shall ring and send for her," contemplatively, crossing the room to the bell-handle. "You can see the poor timid little thing for yourself, and judge if she looks like a conspirator or a spy."

The man shifted his quid.

"I dunno how it is with you, but my 'sp'ience is that the littlest and timidest lookin' women is up to the biggest mischief."

Miss Patty, being a little woman herself, called him to order with the largest kind of look.

"I beg you not to frighten the woman," she said severely.

"Humph!" grunted the man. "They say every Confederit has a pet Yankee. I s'pose this one's yourn."

"I shall put some questions to her," continued Miss Patty, ignoring his impudence except by an indignant flush, "and if there's the slightest evidence of her being a Yankee spy, I shall give her up to be examined by the proper authorities."

"That's a very milk-and-water way of doin' business. I want to show her the soap with her name on it an' the letter inside, an' see how she takes that."

"What name?" asked Miss Patty haughtily, while she trembled from head to foot.

"I must see the woman first," doggedly.

Some minutes elapsed, and the bell was not answered. It was rung again with a like result. Meanwhile, Miss Patty and the man studied each other in aggressive silence. Into this silence there was presently projected Jack's uplifted voice in the distance. There was no doubt about the sound this time. The cheerful cock crow had given place to a naughty bawl, and it kept on bawling. To those familiar with the variations of a child's cry, it was not the result of a pin, or colic, or fright, but of temper; what Afra called "cussedness."

Miss Patty started to go and see what was the matter with her darling. Then she remembered it might not be wise to leave the blockade runner loose among her valuables. She wondered what had become of the servants, that nobody came to the bell. Doubtless they had all rushed to see what ailed Jack, who had found out by this time that he never bawled in vain. The

household was apt to prostrate itself at his feet on such occasions.

At last the cook entered hurriedly, tying on a clean apron.

"Nobody to come to the bell but you, Afra? Where are the others?" asked Miss Patty, greatly vexed.

"Dan'l's out, de maid's takin' car o' Mars Jack, an' I had my hans in de dough an' could n't come befo', Miss Patty."

"The maid taking care of Jack? Why, where's Mrs. Manning?"

The blockade runner pricked up his ears at this name.

"Miss Mannin'? Oh! she's stepped out. Dat's why Mars Jack's bawlin' so. Miss Mannin' she jest set him down in de middle o' de flo' an' went out 'dout tellin' nobody, an' Mars Jack got mad 'cos he was lef' by hissef. Miss Mannin' niver sarved him so befo'."

"Damnation!" thundered the blockade runner, in tones that seemed to rattle the tables and chairs, and made Miss Patty and Afra jump nearly out of their senses.

"What is the meaning of this?" cried Miss Patty, in a weak little voice intended to be severe.

"Meanin'? Hell an' damnation! It means you have let that Yankee bitch git away, all through yo' palaverin'. You meant it. You know you did. I'll report you—I'll report you. An' I'll set every man in this town huntin' for that Yankee bitch," snatching up his hat and striding towards the door in a blind rage.

Afra had recovered her wits by this time. She quietly placed her immense bulk against the door she had closed behind her.

"You ain't gwine to git out o' dis do' tel you take dem cuss wuds back."

"Get out o' the way, you black devil," roared the man, maddened by being balked of his prey and his reward. "You are doin' this to give that woman mo' time. Get out o' the way, I say," trying to hurl Afra from the door.

He might as well have tried to move Gibraltar greased. His hands slipped from her firm rotundities as if they had been buttered.

Miss Patty stood valiantly trembling in a corner. She would have given anything if Afra would let the man go, but she felt bound to stand by the cook's demand for a retraction.

Afra laughed her deep, hoarse laugh. "Mars Larry boun' to be home presently to feed de dogs," — the dogs and her master's coming were fictions, — "an' I kin wait 'tel den, thank de Lawd!"

The man was at bay. Wild to get on Mrs. Manning's track again, he growled, "I take back the words," flinging his retraction like a bone to a dog.

Afra, having enforced the letter of her demand, opened the door. He went out shaking his fist. "Damn you. I 'll make you pay for this some day."

"La! I don't min' yo' cussin' me; I ain't nothin' but a nigger."

He got out of the house, leaving the reverberations of a slammed door behind him.

When he was gone, Miss Patty ambled as fast as her



not over active limbs could carry her to the nursery, to discover the truth about Mrs. Manning. She found Jack cuddled in the chambermaid's arms, his little bosom still heaving with the ground swell of a spent storm. Madelaine had just come in, and, taking off her wrappings, was eagerly questioning what the commotion meant. She had met the blockade runner flinging himself out of the house.

Miss Patty, shaken by her late interview, was too overcome to talk. She sank into a chair and listened to the maid's account of the matter.

"I was makin' up de bed, Miss Madlin, an' Miss Mannin', she had Mars Jack at de winder showin' him de horses in de street, when all at oncet she run out o' de room wid Mars Jack in her arms like she was crazy. I runned to de winder to see what 't was dat sont her flyin' so."

"And what did you see?" asked Miss Patty and Madelaine in a breath.

"I did n't see nothin' but Miss Patty comin' in de house wid a po' white man dat 's been hangin' roun' here lately. Dar 's so many beggars dese days, an' Miss Patty, she holp so many, I nuvver thought nothin' 'bout de man. But Miss Mannin', she 's sort o' skeery. She said yestiddy she did n't know what he was after; maybe he was a robber."

"Well?"

"She did n't stay downstars long. She come back almos' d'reckly, an' put Mars Jack on de flo', and den got her bonnet and shawl. I asked her whar she was gwine."

"And what did she say?"

"She said she had de toofache an' was gwine to have her toof drawn."

"Was that all she said?" asked Miss Patty.

"No, marm. When she went out de do' she shook a bow at me and said, 'Good-by, Lizy, take car o' de baby tel I come back.' When Mars Jack seed she was gone, he hollered like somebody was a-killin' of him."

"Maybe she *will* come back," said Miss Patty meekly.

Mrs. Key took Jack and dismissed Eliza.

"Yes, darling," to Jack, with no especial meaning only general assent to anything he would like. "Aunt Patty, you know I always mistrusted that woman. She never looked me in the face, and always turned red at me."

"Yes, dear, but I never knew whether that was cause or effect. She did not turn red at me."

"I suppose there's not another woman in the Confederacy as much imposed on as you are, aunt. That brute of a blockade runner has worried and frightened you until you are actually trembling."

"Yes," assented Miss Patty.

"And you've supported that sly Mrs. Manning for years."

"Yes."

"And you've adopted this bouncing boy, Jack."

"Yes," recovering in a measure her voice and spirit, "but you ought n't to call *him* an imposition. You know he more than repays me — and you too."

"That is true, Jack."

"And, Madelaine," continued Miss Patty, disposed

to speak up for her protégés, "why not mention Captain Hardwick" —

Here Jack screamed.

"Did I squeeze you too tight?" cried Madelaine, full of repentance.

"Captain Hardwick is no imposition," said Miss Patty, winding up with a peroration. "He's a handsome, brave, splendid fellow!"

Madelaine bent over Jack as she replied, "But in helping Captain Hardwick, you are serving the country. He is a Confederate soldier."

"And I adopted Jack because I believe he is the son of a Confederate soldier."

"I know."

"Madelaine, I think you are not so much interested in Captain Hardwick as you were."

Next to having persons turn red at her, Madelaine disliked being made to turn red herself. She hid her face in Jack's curls as she answered, —

"Captain Hardwick is out of danger."

## XIX.

### NERVOUS PROSTRATION.

MRS. MANNING did not come back. She and her husband disappeared from Richmond, and were not seen there again. Their disappearance seemed proof that the woman had been in communication with the enemy to everybody but Miss Patty. She would not hear of such a thing. She believed Mrs. Manning had been unjustly frightened out of Richmond, and always looked forward to the day when the affair would be explained. It was a sore subject with the old lady that one who had been an inmate of her house should be suspected of being a Yankee spy. She believed the time would come when Mrs. Manning's name would be cleared. Meanwhile, another attendant was procured for Jack, and when the first great excitement had subsided, things settled down into their accustomed grooves. The boy, boylike, forgot to fret for his pretty nurse, and the rest of the household found the new incumbent more congenial than the old. Only, Miss Patty's heart ached when she thought of the woman's ingratitude in leaving her without a word. When a week elapsed and Mrs. Manning had not returned from having her tooth drawn, Afra, wisely nodding her bandannaed head, said, without knowing a word of Shakespeare, "Dat ar toof o' Miss Mannin's 's a sarpent's toof."

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And Miss Patty, with the rest of the world, experienced how sharper than serpent's teeth is thanklessness. She consoled herself that in her house were still a Confederate soldier and the son of a Confederate soldier to expend her sympathies on. Nothing could take from the satisfaction of helping the soldiers of the cause. She was so much interested in Hardwick, she scarcely knew whether she wanted him to get well enough to rejoin his regiment, or remain longer on the sick list that she might have the happiness of taking care of him. Not so with Mrs. Key, who looked anxiously for the time when he should be completely restored and go away. She had not been to see Hardwick since the day when a moment of feeling undid for him the work of weeks of self-restraint. It may be imagined she did not think of him less. The very fact of keeping away from her long-tended patient necessitated hinking of him. It was impossible not to think. She endeavored by incessant occupation to prune the luxuriant efflorescence of thought which of late made her dream by day and lie awake at night. Everything seemed to bear upon and illustrate her condition. An often-related incident in her father's life came back to her as a parable. He had once crossed the ocean; when half way over, an officer discovered in the hold of the vessel a smouldering fire, which required commate caution to withhold from the knowledge of the passengers and ceaseless vigilance to keep under until the ship reached port. Madelaine likened herself to that ship, carrying something which she would not acknowledge even to herself, and which needed constant combat to suppress. At times she was greatly

down-hearted and depressed; at others, she felt as young, as jocund, as foolhardy, as the boy Jack. The heart's eternal child with his bow and arrows warmed himself at the fire, and beckoned her to join him. The tension was becoming so great that Madelaine at last determined to cut the Gordian knot. She wondered she had not thought of the plan before. It was as simple as the trick of Columbus's egg. She sought out her aunt, to inform her of her intention before it had time to cool. She found her at her desk, looking over accounts, for the old lady was treasurer to more than one relief association.

"You are busy?" she said, touched by Miss Patty's pale, tired face, as she looked up from her book.

"Not too busy to attend to you," with a cheery smile, seeing Madelaine's countenance, excited and full of purpose.

"Aunt," drawing her away from her desk and taking a seat beside her, "you work too hard; you look tired out. I wish you would n't assume so many responsibilities."

"I am a little tired to-day, but I should n't be happy unless I was at work. And you are such a help to me, Madelaine. I did n't get on nearly so well until you came."

If Miss Patty had known her niece's mind, she could not have aimed a more direct blow at her intention.

"Dear aunt, I'm so glad you think I've been of use, because"—

"Because what, dear?"

"Can't you guess, dear aunt, what I've come to say?"

"I hope it's nothing sad?"

"I'm afraid you'll think it sad; I know I do. But if a thing must be done, it must."

"Tell me, child, what you are driving at."

"You know, aunt, I've been away from home a long time now."

"Madelaine!" quavered Miss Patty.

"Aunt, you know I hate to leave you and Uncle Larry and Jack, but I must go home to-morrow."

"Has anything happened? Are you needed at home?"

"Nothing has happened — at home. But I must go."

"O Madelaine!" cried the old lady in a trembling voice, looking as if she had received a blow.

Madelaine was touched by her distress. It was so unlike her aunt to give way.

"Why, aunt, think how well you did before I came."

"Yes, but old people miss their props when they've become used to them. And, Madelaine," —

"Yes, aunt."

"I have not told you before — I believe it was because I was too proud. But I was so hurt — so hurt" —

"When, dear?"

"When Mrs. Manning went away without a word."

"The wretch!"

"Oh, not that, but ungrateful. I did not know how fond I was of the little woman."

"I never could endure her."

"And now you are going to leave me."

Madelaine groaned in the spirit. Life is difficult.

Its lines cross and recross each other at so many points that a straight line seems impossible. She was sure she ought to go, and yet it seemed as obvious a duty to stay. Her aunt was suffering more than she could have believed possible from Mrs. Manning's desertion. Gratitude, not to say humanity, indicated that Madelaine should stay with the old lady until she was in a degree comforted. But she had made up her mind to go, and after a few moments she said, —

"Aunt, it shall be only for a little while. I must go now. You will trust me when I tell you it is my duty to go. I can't tell you why just now, but you will trust me."

"Certainly, my dear, but you will tell me one thing: are you not well?"

"No, I am not well. I'm afraid I'm going to have something like — nervous prostration. I can't count on myself. Absence — that is, country air will cure me."

"Then you must go, dear," said Miss Patty sadly, as she returned to her desk.

Madelaine was relieved that she took the matter so quietly at the last. She went back to her room and began emptying wardrobes and drawers preparatory to packing her trunks. She felt better already. Resolution and action are great tonics. She worked so vigorously that by dinner time everything was in readiness to leave in the morning.

At dinner, she found she had reckoned without her hostess. When she went down to the dining-room, only Larry was there. She was requested to help to the soup.



"Why, where is Aunt Patty?"

"Patty is not well, and has gone to bed," said Larry gloomily. Like most men he was put out by a change in the routine of affairs.

"Checkmated," thought Madelaine, taking the head of the table and helping her uncle to soup. "I did not know she would take my going away so much to heart. I must stay. Perhaps it was cowardly to run away. I must conquer my nerves. Surely with an effort I can think of other things."

She began talking with her uncle of Bo's misfortunes.

A servant with a waiter and plate came to her. "Cap'n Hardwick's soup, please, Miss Madlin."

Her heart sank. In this house, how was she to think of other things? Carefully arranging the invalid's meal, she did not hear her uncle asking a question.

"Are you dreaming, Madelaine? Three times I've asked you how the Disneys are getting on since Bo lost her place in the department."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. You see I'm not accustomed to the head of the table. They are getting on very badly. And that reminds me, they have some handsome old silver to sell. Would you like to buy a wine cooler, for instance?"

Larry's eyebrow agitated itself as he smiled.

"A wine cooler, when we've discarded wine until the Confederacy is established! Is n't there something else?"

"Yes, a cake basket."

"Cake, another luxury!"

"Spoons?"

Larry chuckled, and his eyebrow disappeared in the fringe of hair that lingered above his forehead.

"Spoons have been unlucky in New Orleans."

Madelaine bit her lip. Her uncle's facetiousness did not amuse her. How could he joke about the Disneys' misfortunes!

Larry was not a man of concealments. In the next breath, the secret of his gayety was disclosed.

"I tell you what it is, Madelaine, I'll take the wine cooler, the cake basket, and the spoons, if they don't ask an outrageous price for them."

"Uncle Larry!" ashamed of her irritation.

"I like the Disneys, particularly that pretty Bo. I'm glad to know some way in which a body can help them."

"Uncle Larry!"

"You shall be my agent, Madelaine, but don't buy all the things at once. Bo does n't know anything about money. If she has a little pile, the first thing we know she will give a party, a salon, or some such tomfoolery."

Madelaine smiled; she had never known her uncle to be so keen a judge of human nature.

After dinner, she went to look after Miss Patty. She found her aunt in bed and undoubtedly unhappy, which with her amounted to the same thing as being ill.

She was at that age when physical and mental troubles so react on each other as to be scarcely separable. Mrs. Manning's going had been a blow. It was as if she had lost one hand, and Madelaine's intended departure made her feel as if she were going to lose the other. The old lady succumbed under the

double infliction. Madelaine brought back her smiles, when she announced her intention to remain. The younger woman's nerves were braced and their prostration postponed by an effort to cheer the elder's drooping spirits.

A few days later, Madelaine was enabled in the most unexpected way to give her aunt a crumb of comfort in another direction.

Although the two nations or, more strictly speaking, the two parts of a divided nation, were for the most part busy cutting each other's throats, they were yet bound by ties which fire and bloodshed failed to sever. Proofs of this lay in the personals which appeared in the newspapers contrived to be exchanged between the two sections. Every day, columns of pathetic messages, sent from one side of the bloody chasm to the other, were scanned by eager eyes North and South. A whole heart-history was often embedded in two lines. In time, they came ingeniously to convey so much contraband information as to be forbidden. They were in full swing when one day a headline, "To Miss P. P.," in the New York Herald caught Madelaine's eye.

"That might mean Miss Patty Pritchard," she said to herself, without really believing it, for the family had no connections on the other side. But the personal went on to say, "Please believe the nurse who left suddenly is innocent. Gratefully, English woman."

"This is undoubtedly for Aunt Patty from Mrs. Manning!" cried Madelaine joyfully. Had she found a nugget of gold she could not have been more delighted. She ran with the newspaper to her aunt.

"For me, Madelaine? A personal for me Miss Patty, putting on her spectacles with hands. When she had read the little passage, she was obliged to take them off again the glasses blurred with tears.

"I knew it — I knew it," she cried, giving ment immediate and entire faith. "I did n't b woman could be so ungrateful, and I knew sh a traitor. I hope the whole mystery will be before I die!"

Madelaine did not give such full credence Manning's personal, but she was glad her comforted and the English woman out of She was glad, too, that she herself had decided main, for Miss Patty was not strong, and looking after to prevent her overtaxing her the cause.

## XX.

### FOR A PIECE OF SILVER.

AFTER Bo's misfortune in losing the use of her hand, she remained a short time on the list of treasury note-signers with the hope of being soon restored. As weeks wore on and restoration was every day postponed, she resigned her position. Since then, she and her mother had been living on old silver. One by one, pieces of handsome hereditary plate had been sold, until now only a christening bowl stood between them and starvation.

Bo had her heart griefs, as we know, but she kept up a brave show for her mother's sake. It did not bring back the color to her cheeks nor the flash to her eyes, but her spirit was indomitable. She was apparently as cheerful as before the little rift in her heart spoiled its music. Her right-hand fingers could not yet grasp a pen, but she could still do good work at scrubbing. With brush and chamois she burnished the cherub faces round the bowl's brim until they blinked again. She was polishing them up for the market. In and out among the traceries ran the legend in Latin, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

"Where did this queer, heavy thing come from, mamma?" she asked, holding the bowl at arm's length

to get the effect of light on its deep indentations and high reliefs.

"Your father brought it home from Mexico, after the Mexican war."

Silence for a while.

"I'm afraid we sha'n't have much silver at the close of *this* war."

"If the war would only close, I should not care for silver," returned her mother, with a sigh.

"This looks like church silver. Did our troops sack churches in Mexico?"

"I hope not. I never heard that they did. Your father bought this for a song in the City of Mexico."

"Well, it will take a good many songs, and not songs o' sixpence either, to buy it now. Was I christened out of it?"

"Yes, and how you screamed!" smiling at the reminiscence.

"Then it has served me one good turn, and now I hope it will serve me another. It has ministered to the spirit, and now it must minister to the flesh."

"O Bo! your remark sounds like levity."

"I don't mean it so. My body is as much God-given as my soul, and to keep them together we are obliged to sell the silver. Now it seems to me like spiritual pride to be christened out of such a gorgeous affair. Maybe ~~that~~ is the reason I am obliged to work off some of the old leaven now," rubbing away with the greatest amount of ~~elbow~~ lubrication. "My children shall be christened out of" —

This important declaration was interrupted by a knock at the door. Bo looked up, scared lest she

should have been overheard talking about such mythical personages.

"Oh, it's only Sambo," the knock being followed by a knotty-headed, damp-nosed little negro.

"What do you want, Sambo?"

"Mr. Pitcher down stairs, an' say as how he want to see Miss Bo."

"I wish Mr. Pritchard had chosen a better time," she said impatiently, contemplating her ten grimy fingers and chalk-whited dress. "Maybe he has a message from Madelaine. Say I'll be down in a minute."

Although Larry had some minutes, while Bo was getting rid of the grime and chalk, to map out what he wanted to say and how to say it, he was long in beginning. He turned many colors and uttered many ahems before he got started. Bo, having no idea whither his thoughts tended, could not help him. She tried the weather, Madelaine, Dallas, Jack, all to no purpose. Her thoughts went back to the bowl and the cherubim's noses she had not polished to her satisfaction. She wished Larry had not interrupted her work. There were the grime and chalk to go through again.

Finally he began.

"Miss Bo, Madelaine says — that is, I came to ask if you had — if there's any more silver" — tumbled out at last.

"Oh, I know what you mean," cried Bo, grasping his meaning in a flash. "But you've been too good to us already. I know you have more silver now than you know what to do with, and I won't impose on you."

"But you are mistaken. Madelaine says you have

be so big and heavy as Bo described. Curiosity added piquancy to his desire to purchase.

"You know, Miss Bo," he continued, "if it's some woman's contraption" —

"No, no," she interrupted, "it is nothing of a woman's."

"I was going to say if it was, I could give it to a lady."

Bo bit her lip.

"Oh!" she exclaimed quickly, "that would never do. No, Mr. Pritchard, you can't have it at any price. I am going to try and sell it to a church. It will take a whole congregation to pay the price I expect to get for it."

Larry's eyebrow went up to his hair, as it did when he smiled.

"Our parson says the congregations are poorer than the individuals."

"How does he make that out?" blankly.

"He says they are *aggregations* of poverty; ho, ho!"

Bo's persistence stimulated Larry's desire to buy. Besides, the chance mention of giving the silver to a lady suggested an idea that irradiated his face with another purpose.

"I don't know what your piece of silver is, and you don't seem inclined to tell me, but" —

"Oh!" said Bo, disposing of the subject with a flushed face, seeing she could not get out of it. "It's a christening bowl and" —

"A christening bowl?" echoed Larry, his bald head showing red again. "Humph! and why shouldn't I want a christening bowl as well as any man?"



"I supposed you had been christened long ago," with dignity.

Larry's face became still brighter. His new purpose had received another impetus. The difficulty was how to state it. He looked into his hat for inspiration. The contemplation did not help him. He raised his eyes to Bo's face, paler and thinner than it used to be, and then looked at the hand which had lost its bread-winning cunning.

"Miss Bo, when you have sold the bowl and spent the money, what are you going to do then?"

Bo turned pale. This was a question that gnawed like a rat's tooth at her heart, and which she tried in vain to postpone. Larry touched the sore spot with unerring aim.

She closed her eyes and caught her breath as she answered, —

"I try not to think of that, Mr. Pritchard."

"Miss Bo," shuffling his feet and fumbling with his hands in his nervousness, "you know I want to help you."

"But you don't know how miserable it makes me to feel that I'm an object of charity. For myself, death is nothing to it. But there is my mother" —

"Don't, don't talk like that. I said I should like to help you, but that is n't *half* what I mean. I should *love* to help you, but I'm a blundering man, and don't know how to do it without hurting your feelings."

"No, no. *You* don't hurt my feelings. I'm railing at fate for bringing me down so low when I'm so proud."

Larry paused and gathered himself together for a

plunge. His breathing was hard, his head beaded with moisture, as he said, —

"I know one way to manage it, Miss Bo. Do you think you could marry me?" humbly.

"*Marry you?*" gasped Bo, staring at his wrinkled face and bald head. "*Marry you?*" while a vision of liquid dark eyes mocked her with their beauty. It was as one drowning, seeing a refuge of iron-ribbed rock take the place of the green pastures of the mirage.

"I know it's very dreadful," shrinking before her horror-stricken face.

"Yes," dejectedly. "It is very dreadful for people to marry who do not love each other."

Larry clenched and unclenched his hands. "But *I do love you.*"

"But I don't love you, Mr. Pritchard; and if I were to marry you, it would be for that wretched thing called convenience."

"You know in troubled times" —

"Yes, I know in troubled and untroubled times, such things are done every day; but how I have *despised* the men and women who did them!"

"I know I could not make you happy, but I could take care of you and your mother."

Bo's face reflected the agony of her feelings.

"I confess, Mr. Pritchard, you offer me a great temptation to do you a great wrong."

"Don't be so troubled, my dear child," pleaded Larry, touched by her misery. "I just spoke of this as one way out of your difficulties."

"*One way?*" groaned Bo, swaying back and forth.

"My God, as far as I can see it's the *only* way!" Then noting his troubled face, she burst forth hysterically, "But I thank you for it, Mr. Pritchard, on my knees I thank you for it. I shall look upon you as our deliverer. Every day I pray for help, and God has sent you to help us. My life shall be spent in trying to make you happy."

After a pause, she sobbed forth afresh, "No, no, I can't do it! You must give me time!"

"Yes, yes, all the time you want," he said soothingly.

He went away, leaving the question open.

When he was gone, Bo dried her eyes and tried to think the matter over calmly. She remembered with a bitter smile what she had once said to Madelaine about her uncle making a good "Auld Robin Gray," and how absurd the idea seemed then. With the strange impulse that often forces jests from broken hearts, she scoffed at herself.

"Yes, we are getting to be very *French*," shrinking from the word as from the touch of an exposed nerve. "Mamma agreed to a *salon* for my sake. I can't do less than make a *mariage de convenance* for hers."

She went back to her work with laggard step and miserable, heart-broken countenance. The sight of the christening bowl pierced her like a dagger. The cherub faces her hand had burnished and her imagination furnished with baby smiles and dark, velvety French eyes had become, all at once, bald and grotesque with an old man's purblind glances. She let the bowl fall with a crash and took refuge in her own

room. There she threw herself on her bed and buried her face in the pillow.

"I can't do it! I can't do it! Flesh and blood cry out against it. God does not require such a sacrifice! If the worst comes I can beg. I *will* beg!"

The hours wore on while Bo fought the old battle with the old arguments over and over again. Worn out at last she fell asleep with the decision that she would beg rather than marry Larry Pritchard.

"I can beg, and, Heaven help me, I *will* beg," was her last waking thought.

Late in the evening her mother opened the door softly and entered with noiseless step. She did not wish to disturb Bo, if she still slept. In spite of her precaution, her presence penetrated the girl's troubled dreams.

"Mother," she said, rubbing her eyes and peering into the dim half-light that had swallowed up the room while she was asleep. "Is that you?"

"Yes, dear. I did n't mean to disturb you, but I came to ask if there was any bread left from dinner. I'm *so* hungry, darling."

The feeble voice touched Bo as no other sound could. She sprang from the bed, her resolution swung to the other extreme.

"Yes, mamma," laughing with forced hilarity. "There is a whole loaf I bought when I was out this morning, and what is better, I have arranged that you shall never be hungry any more."

"O Bo!" exclaimed her mother, clasping her wan hands about her daughter's neck and bursting into tears. "Then I thank God!"

When the weakness had passed, she found voice to ask, —

“How have you done it, my child?”

Bo braced herself and, smiling, said without a break in her voice, —

“I am going to marry Mr. Pritchard.”



## XXI.

### FOR JACK'S SAKE.

THE day arrived at last when Hardwick's patience came to an end. One afternoon, towards the close of April, he determined to make an effort to get out of bed and go downstairs preparatory to going away. Miss Pritchard and Daniel were out of the way when the undertaking was made, and he persuaded Afra to assist him in his project. He had achieved the greater part of his toilet without too much fatigue, and was about to get into his coat and trousers, when Afra, with an air of triumph, opened a wardrobe and brought out a new uniform of spotless gray, decked with the chevrons, buttons, and braid of a Confederate infantry captain.

"See what Miss Patty done had made for you!" said the woman with great glee, unfolding the military splendors to Hardwick's dismayed eyes. The sight seemed to overwhelm the young man. He covered his eyes with his hands and tottered back to the bed.

"This is too much!" he stammered.

"Miss Patty don't think nothin's too much or too good for one of our soldiers," cried Afra, steadying her patient. "Jest set down an' rest a minute, an' I'll git you somethin' to drink. When you gits inter yo' new uniform, you'll cut a shine. De ladies will be for

you up," she added, looking admiringly, as if she not object to a mouthful herself.

Edwick gulped down some unexplained feeling, recovered himself with an effort. He even tried to smile at Afra's joke. Finally, when he was combed and dressed, and looking as handsome as the woman who had just appeared, the latter showed him the way to the door.

It was the first time he had been in the room since the night he made his appearance there in a startling fashion. Twilight, penetrated with the softness and radiance of firelight, filled the apartment as he entered. With slow, uncertain steps he made his way to the hearth, and dropped into Miss Patty's chair.

After all, how good it is to be alive and about the world! "It" seemed to be the expression of his whole being. With a delicious sense of rest after exertion, he sank back on Miss Patty's pillows. A bath, a barber, fresh air, and an armchair had made him feel as comfortable and delightfully good for nothing as a new recruit.

As he sat by the fire, his head thrown lazily back, his appearance was so unlike what it had been when he stumbled into the house that one might have said he had been created anew in the mean time. The sunburn had faded from his features, leaving his skin as fair and smooth as marble. His hair was clean shaven. A delicate blue tint, contrasting with his complexion, was all that was left of his unkempt beard. His hair, which had been cut so as to leave but a hint of its luxuriant curliness, was now his martial head in short, crisp waves. He looked every inch a soldier, but a soldier in his

softer moods, as Achilles when his war-bronzed countenance had become fair among the daughters of Lycomedes. His hands, which lately lay pale and nerveless on the coverlet, were white still, but pulsating with life to the finger tips. Health was returning in full tide. It convinced Hardwick that it was time to take up his knapsack and depart. He drew a long breath. It was like the breath of a new existence, unfettered by pain or weakness. The beautiful room in which he was reclining, the glowing fire of soft coal, added to a sense of well-being which he enjoyed in every fibre. He lingered over it as a child over the last, sweetest drop of a drained cup. To-morrow, he would be gone. Only one thing was wanting for happiness, which at no time could have been so full and perfect as now when a gulf seemed to separate him from the past, and a fair, new page was turned on which to begin life's account again. Hardwick sighed. Dull care had come to jog his memory as to a trouble from which no gulf could separate him. Just then the door opened, and Mrs. Key with Jack in her arms entered the room. The invalid started to his feet with heightened color, and then sank back pale as death. He was not so strong as he imagined.

"I have startled you! I'm so sorry!" cried Madeline, frightened by his pallor. "I did not know you were here. Ought you to have come down? Can I get you something?"

"No thank you. Please take a seat, Mrs. Key. It was my own fault. I believe I've been dreaming," stammered Hardwick.

"You were asleep, and we waked you?"



"No, I was dreaming with my eyes open."

"That is not strange with this beautiful fire. Jack and I came down to see the fire, did n't we, Jack? I often dream over it in the twilight," said Madelaine, trying to cover his agitation.

"Pooy!" an equivalent for pretty, cried Jack, stretching his dimpled fingers to the blaze.

"You will not go?" pleaded Hardwick, seeing Madelaine turn towards the door, her intention being to get him a glass of wine. "You are very kind, Mrs. Key, but I want nothing except — Won't you sit here a moment? I have something to say to you."

Madelaine colored and hesitated.

"No, Mrs. Key, not that. You have forbidden me to speak of that, and my lips are sealed. There is something else I would say. Won't you listen to me?"

Thus entreated, Madelaine sat down. He was so much in earnest and so pale, she could not have refused even had she so wished. It was the poor fellow's fortune to be both handsome and helpless, and it was hard to resist his pleading. Madelaine was built on large lines. She looked quite a grand figure on a sofa on the opposite side of the fire with Jack on her knees. The fitful flame, which played at hide and seek among the boy's yellow curls, left her at one time in shadow, and at another transformed her face with warmth and light. To Hardwick's imagination she and Jack seemed to be flitting mysteriously in and out among the shades of blind man's holiday. One moment they were in strong relief, the next they eluded his straining vision.

A cluster of white violets in Madelaine's dress, into which Jack now and again buried his nose with an ecstatic whiff, added the charm of its delicate odor to the witching time and place. In the foreground of man's ideal happiness are grouped always a woman and child. Man has never looked across a hearthrug at a more lovable instance of such grouping than met Hardwick's eyes. After a pause, in which Madelaine felt her color rise under his regard, while she wondered what he could have to tell her, he said, —

"You are very fond of Jack, Mrs. Key."

"Was *this* what he had to say?" she thought. "So fond of him that I do not like to think of leaving him," she said aloud.

Hardwick turned a shade paler if possible; certainly, his countenance changed, but Madelaine, looking into the child's eyes, which were beginning to draw straws, did not perceive it.

"And *will* you ever leave him?"

"I'm afraid Aunt Patty will not let me take him home with me when I go. Dear little rogue, I feel as if he belonged to me."

"I'm glad of that."

Mrs. Key looked up. She said nothing, but her eyes asked an unmistakably surprised "Why?"

Hardwick understood, and answered, "Because I feel as if he belonged to me."

That was a queer thing to say. Hardwick was ill and weak, but he had no fever and seemed to be in his senses.

"I don't understand," she began, angry with herself for blushing to the roots of her hair.

"I did not suppose you would," he interrupted, his face brightening to her blush as to the dawn. "It is what I wanted to speak to you about."

Madelaine turned hot and cold. What was coming? Something in the air portended a crisis. Jack felt it. His drowsy eyes opened wide. He nestled closer to Madelaine's bosom, as dumb creatures cower before a storm. Hardwick's face was a battlefield of emotions, and his voice so charged with feeling as to set the heart of woman and child to fluttering.

"You could not know," he said, "that I love Jack better than any living creature except — one."

No, Madelaine had not known. A jet from the bituminous coal breaking into flame illuminated her countenance, blank with amazement.

"I did not know that you cared for him at all," she answered coldly, with an instinctive tightening of her clasp on the boy.

"Would it give you an idea of how much I care for him, to tell you that I risked life and honor to get one look at his face?" stammered Hardwick.

"You knew of his being here?" her eyes dilating and her manner growing colder, as the whirl in her brain became more bewildering.

"Ah! don't speak so. Don't be hard on me. I did know, but — but" — His voice faltered and the color died out of his face, signs of weakness irresistible to a woman.

Madelaine, reproaching herself for cruelty to an ill man, hastened to say, "I don't wish to be hard on you. We will talk of this another time, when you are better."

"God bless you, Mrs. Key!" said Hardwick, with brimming eyes and face warmed and flushed as with new wine, "and God bless my boy."

Madelaine was too much moved to say anything in reply.

Silence was broken by the clock on the chimney-piece striking six. Hardwick's and Madelaine's eyes met. The little silvery voice marked the moment of time in their memories forever.

Jack, to whom the occasion was of no small interest, laid his head on the cushion in the corner of the sofa, where Mrs. Key had placed him with the feeling that he no longer belonged to her, and fell asleep. Night having closed in, a servant came in the room to mend the fire and light the lamps; and no one had spoken.

Madelaine was trying to accommodate her mind to the wonderful fact that Jack's father, through no effort of hers, was found at last, while Hardwick was reduced to silence by the number of things he wanted to say.

Finally, when the servant was gone, "Mrs. Key, if you will listen to me," he began brokenly.

"I'm quite ready to listen, Captain Hardwick."

"I want you to believe that I had nothing to do with the boy being left here."

Madelaine's face cleared. If that were so, Hardwick had not been so much to blame.

"I was away — with the army," he continued, "when the boy was born about two years ago, and when my wife died in December. I have been cut off from all communication since the beginning of the war, and did not know of either event until not long

before I came here. Through no fault of mine, my wife and child were thrown upon the charity of strangers, who, when my wife died, left the boy here at your aunt's door."

Having with great effort told his story, Hardwick leaned back on Miss Patty's pillows, exhausted. The pitiful tale, told in a simple, straightforward way, carried conviction to Mrs. Key.

"Captain Hardwick," she said warmly, ashamed of her suspicions, "I understand it all now, and I think God must have put it into the mind of those strangers to leave Jack here. Don't be troubled about it any more. The child, you know, has found home and friends here, and nothing makes my aunt so happy as the certainty that she is caring for the boy of one of our soldiers."

Hardwick looked at her steadfastly without answering, and his face was so miserable that she felt she had failed in the comfort she wanted to give. Her heart swelled with pity.

"If it would make you happier to know" — she began, her voice richer and kindlier than ever with generous emotion.

"For God's sake, Mrs. Key," he interrupted, "don't be kind to me; I can stand anything but that!"

"Captain Hardwick!"

"I know what you would say," he went on. "You would assure me that you will be kind to my boy, and may God bless you for it. If anything could make me happier, it would be that. But happiness and I have parted company forever;" and his countenance looked drawn and haggard, as if he spoke truth.

"With a boy to live for and a country to die for, a man should not say that."

Hardwick's lip quivered.

"What if a man has forfeited his right to do either?" he asked, his voice betraying possibilities of misery beyond Madelaine's conjecture.

"But that cannot be!" she cried, turning pale.

"You can understand how it can be," he said steadily, though his eyes gleamed like burning coals; "that my case is such that if I fall into the hands of one army I shall be shot as a deserter, and if the other, hanged as a spy."

Madelaine, white as a ghost, started to her feet, overwhelmed by fears too horrible to contemplate.

"Captain Hardwick!" she gasped, "Who are you? What have you done?"

"I — I have — loved," he faltered, his glance falling on the sleeping child, "and risked everything to get one look at Jack."

He looked appealingly into Madelaine's stern face, his eyes eloquent with the appeal, "Forgive much, for I have loved much."

Madelaine drew a long breath, and the color came back to her cheek.

"You mean you left the army without leave? There can be no harm in that. You were ill, and men do not fight in a delirium of fever," she cried, sinking back into her seat.

Hardwick shook his head sadly.

"I mean more than that."

"But do not tell me more," she begged, clasping her hands.

"Dear lady, may I not tell you that my life is in your hands?"

"Captain Hardwick!"

"You have but to speak a word, and before to-morrow's sun goes down I shall be hanged as a spy."

"Captain Hardwick!" her face wild and horror-struck, "are you — are you — ah!"

"Yes," he said humbly.

"Captain Hardwick!"

"My name is not Hardwick."

Madelaine buried her face in her hands and moaned. It was a moment of weakness. Then she rose and stood before him, trembling, indeed, but straight as a lance, her eyes and cheeks aflame. Even in that dread moment she seemed to Hardwick a beautiful, terrible angel as she denounced him.

"You wear Confederate gray," she said, in low, concentrated tones, "but it seems you are an enemy. You and your child are quartered upon this house, and by the law of charity, you must be treated with hospitality as long as you are helpless. If you are a spy," — Hardwick groaned, — "I suppose no law is binding on you."

"My God! this is more than I can bear," thought Hardwick, but he could not speak. Something in his throat seemed to choke him. At last with effort he got out the words, "I will give my parole."

"Parole of *honor*?"

No man could put a sting into words like her emphasis.

Union men during the war had the advantage in the newest and most effective arms, but there will never be

invented a weapon of offense equal to that which the Confederate woman carried with her always. When a Federal soldier came within range of its bewildering fire, his Confederate brother was avenged. All Madelaine's passionate patriotism, with its terrible resentments and griefs, broke forth. Her voice was low, but her words were keen and cruel as daggers that find a mortal spot with every thrust.

Hardwick's countenance expressed all the anguish a man can feel. He was deathly pale, his forehead contracted with a dark furrow between the brows, his blue eyes looked black as he raised them piteously to her face.

Madelaine was too excited to notice these warnings, and presently, while she was invoking destruction on her country's invaders, especially on those secret enemies who came in the garb of friends, he fainted.

"Ah! I have killed him!" she cried, terrified, as his head fell back and he lay white and still as death. She opened a window; she loosened his gray coat; she brought water from the adjoining room and bathed his face. After a time, in which she became more and more frightened and redoubled her efforts to revive him, he heaved a great sigh and opened his eyes. They met hers as she hung over him. They were beautiful eyes, both the blue and the gray. Eyes do not wear hostile colors. That is, Hardwick's of loyal blue drank in a moment of happiness from the encounter. The rebel gray lowered their colors, and the lids behind which they retired were white as flags of truce. Mrs. Key pressed her hand to her side with a long, deep sob. She was shaken by relief following close



upon anxiety, and by the revelations of the evening. The movement was an unconscious effort to still the tumult of her heart. Hardwick's eyes had again stirred feelings, whether of happiness or pain she could not tell, but which had been long buried and she believed to be dead. Whatever they were, they had sprung for a moment to passionate life again, and Madelaine, with burning cheeks, thought of herself as a traitor to her country and her own soul. Suddenly, into the tense, throbbing stillness of the moment there broke a sound of hustling feet, angry voices, and a thundering knock at the front door. A deafening uproar raged round the house, and out of the din there presently rose clear-cut, intelligible sentences.

"This is the house!"

"The damned Yankee is inside!"

"Yank him out of bed!"

"Have him out!"

"The lamp-post is just round the corner!"

This and more yelled a mob outside. Night had all at once become hideous. Hardwick, weak as he was, sprang to his feet and began tearing off his coat. He would not meet death under false colors. Madelaine, white as ashes, put out her hand.

"Keep it on," she commanded.

As she spoke, the door of the room was flung open, and Daniel ushered in two young Confederate lieutenants. Outside, the hall was full of soldiers, who guarded the front door against the mob in the street. Seeing Mrs. Key, the officers paused upon the threshold.

"I beg pardon for intruding, madam," said the

elder, blushing like a schoolboy at his ungracious task, "but we have been detailed to search these premises."

"You must obey orders, of course," said Madelaine calmly, "but may I ask for what purpose? Do you know my brother, gentlemen?" indicating Hardwick, whom in right of his rank they saluted. "Are we not good Confederates?"

"None better, madam," said the lieutenant, who knew Mrs. Key by sight and her brothers by reputation. "But we have received information that your hospitality is being imposed upon by a Federal spy."

Madelaine started.

"A Federal spy?"

"A Federal spy, madam."

"And how did you learn this?"

"The information came from the surgeon-general's office."

"Dr. Maguire must have reported this," said Madelaine, turning to her brother.

Hardwick bowed.

"Dr. Maguire," she resumed, turning to the lieutenant, "has been attending a patient here, dangerously ill."

"Yes, madam, that's the fellow, and although still in bed, he's reported well enough to be removed."

"It's strange Dr. Maguire never told us of his suspicions," said Madelaine to her brother, who was stroking the sleeping boy's curls.

"May we be shown to the man's room?" said the lieutenant impatiently, the noise outside becoming every moment more violent.

Madelaine's spirit rose with the tumult, and her

brain became preternaturally active under excitement. "Certainly; and I will go with you. Daniel," giving the negro a look which he perfectly understood, "show these gentlemen Captain Hardwick's room. I'll follow in a moment."

"Hardwick?" said the officer. "Yes, that's the name the fellow assumes, — the name of a gallant Georgian killed near Ashland." A movement on the sofa made Madelaine turn quickly.

"Don't move, brother. Gentlemen, you will excuse my brother from assisting you. As you see, he, too, is just recovering from a dangerous illness."

When they were out of the room, she turned to Hardwick, and said in low, rapid tones, —

"Your only chance is to go out of the front door and through the crowd. Your uniform will protect you. A Confederate cap and overcoat are on the rack in the hall. Daniel's wife lives at the corner of Main and First streets. Go there, and tell her I sent you. Come."

"But," objected Hardwick.

"Don't oppose me," sharply.

She led the way into the hall, and as she helped him on with the overcoat, she breathed into his ear, —

"You give me your parole?"

"By all that is sacred, my parole of *honor*."

"My men," she said to the soldiers on guard, "let my brother out, and one of you get him through the crowd. He is ill and weak, but he is going on an errand of life and death. When you come back, I will give you a supper."

She knew her dear, famished Confederates well. Half the men offered to be Hardwick's escort.

Hardwick, meanwhile, faint, feverish, and coming under Madelaine's sway, was being made to act with scarcely any volition of his own. At that moment, however, he threw himself into the chair and imposed its conditions in the most unceremonious manner on Madelaine herself.

"Good-by, my sister," he said tenderly, stooping to kiss her trembling lips.

Madelaine, amazed, abashed, and blushing could not resist.

Having proclaimed that this ill brother was going on an errand of life and death, it was laid on her to act out the part. Her mouth met his as drop meets the all-compelling sun ; and Hardwick, tasting happiness, went out to meet his fate with a care.

Madelaine, with her cheeks on fire, went back to the parlor, and bending over the sleeping child murmured between tender kisses, —

"It was all for your sake, Jack."

A still small voice whispered back, —

"Was it all for Jack's sake?"

## XXII.

### LOVE RULES THE CAMP.

A DEAFENING roar from the street followed the opening and shutting of the front door on Hardwick and his escort. The mob, greeting what they believed to be a Federal spy with a howl of rage, gave another of disappointment when they found the house had disgorged only a couple of Confederate soldiers, one of whom, supported by his companion, looked more dead than alive.

The crowd made way for a man manifestly not able to get on without assistance. In a few minutes, Hardwick was beyond the press, and his escort fighting his way back to the house for his promised provender. Meanwhile, the uproar had roused the house to the wildest excitement. Fortunately, Mr. and Miss Pritchard were out of the way, Miss Patty having gone with Larry to call on the Disneys, for the first time since his engagement. The servants were frightened out of their wits by the commotion and the presence of so many soldiers. They rushed pellmell into the parlor.

"For God's sake, Mrs. Key," cried the new nurse, trembling in every limb as she caught up Jack from the sofa, "what's the matter?"

"O Miss Madlin, has de Yankees done took

Richmon' at las'?" moaned Afra, rocking back and forth with her apron thrown over her head.

"Nothing of the kind. But the house is being searched for a Yankee soldier. Keep quiet. There's no need to be frightened."

"How's a Yankee soldier gwine to git in here?" said Afra quickly, uncovering her head and looking more inquisitive than scared.

"Will they do anything to us?" gasped the terror-stricken nurse.

Madelaine, remembering her promise to accompany the searching party, left the chattering women and ran upstairs. On the first landing, she met the lieutenants and Daniel returning, the former voluble with anger, the negro patient and stupid as the case required. He had understood Mrs. Key's tacit command, and obeyed.

"'T ain't wuth yo' while hustlin' me, marster, I dunno nothin' 'bout no Yankee," he was saying to the officer, who, holding him by the collar, was apparently trying to shake the breath out of his body.

"You scoundrelly negroes are all in league with the Yankees. You've allowed this one to escape. If you don't tell me where he is, I'll break every bone in your damned black skin."

"I dunno whar no Yankee is no mo' dan de dade."

At sight of Mrs. Key, the officer tried to curb himself.

"The man who occupied that room is gone," he said angrily.

"Gone?"

"That is, he is not there, and we shall be obliged

rch the house thoroughly. It's a deuced ugly  
s."

as there not long ago," said Mrs. Key calmly.  
ust have escaped downstairs, while I was here.  
s really a Yankee, all this noise round the house  
ly warned him, and our outer doors, the back as  
the front, are always unlocked."

George, the back door!" exclaimed the lieu-

on should have come quietly. What made you  
mob at your heels?"

e did n't bring the mob," indignantly. "We  
it roaring round the house. The rumor of a  
e spy leaked out somehow, and the crowd got  
of us."

nd n't you better begin the search?" asked Mrs.  
ringing her aunt's keys.

ether they searched every corner of the house,  
t finding a trace of a Yankee. When they got  
parlor, the servants, who had been dodging the  
s, were gone with the boy Jack.

younger of the officers said, "Mrs. Key, where  
brother, Captain Key, who was here when we  
"

s, where is your brother? He might give us  
information," said the other.

brother?" returned Madelaine, while her heart  
to stand still. "Ill as he is, he went out to see  
ould not get rid of the mob round the house.  
pleasant to be besieged in this way."

me," said the elder officer to his comrade, "we  
e going. Perhaps we will meet the captain."

"It is very dangerous for him to be out this damp evening," said Mrs. Key.

The officers with their men went away without a suspicion of the truth.

"Thank God, they've gone!" burst from Madelaine hysterically between laughing and crying. "I couldn't have stood it another minute. My endurance was wound up to last just so long. If I'd been obliged to say another word, I should have betrayed myself—and him," catching up the sofa pillow and burying her face in it. The necessity for effort withdrawn, she had relapsed into a trembling, frightened woman. She was terrified at her own audacity. She reviewed what she had done as if it had been performed by an altogether different person. It seemed as if it *had* been a different person from this shrinking coward in the corner of the sofa, hugging a pillow to her violently throbbing heart. She had never before consciously acted a part. She thought how poorly and with what weak knees she had gone through it, and how stupid those young fellows were not to have discovered her. She did not know that she had concealed her terror with the coolness of a Spartan, and acted her part without a flaw.

Now that it was all over and the rush of feeling had subsided, she was tormented with the question as to whether she had been right in letting her prisoner go. From her point of view, he had performed a splendidly courageous and pardonable act in risking everything to get one look at his son. A man is a man before he is a soldier. She could not persuade herself that the government would have seen it in the



same light. On the other hand, she could not ignore the fact that even she could never have regarded him so leniently had she known at the beginning that he was one of the enemy. She had learned to know him through long weeks of patient suffering as a brave, handsome, loyal Confederate soldier. There was the difference.

The disturbance in the street gradually ceased, and in attempting to go quietly over the scene which had left her so shaken, Mrs. Key remembered that something in Daniel's behavior had struck her as peculiar. A sudden light flashed upon her. She called the man up.

"Daniel!" her manner was so agitated and full of meaning that the negro felt what was coming. He turned ashen gray, and stood first on one foot and then the other, as he answered humbly, —

"Yes, Miss Madlin."

"You knew about Captain Hardwick?" Silence, broken only by the man's heavy breathing.

"It will be better for you to tell me the truth."

"Befo' Gawd, Miss Madlin, I did n't mean no harm."

The flash of light which had given Madelaine the first clew increased every moment. A bandage seemed to have fallen from blinded eyes, revealing the situation as at midday.

The occasion was too momentous and full of danger for many words. Her words fell sharp and quick as if forced out by the violent heart throbs beating against her side.

"You brought Captain Hardwick here?"

"Lawd have mussy on my po' soul!" groaned Daniel, in an agony of terror.

"Don't make a noise, but tell me the truth at once. The soldiers may be back again," her own face blanching, as she glanced round the room to see if the doors were tightly closed.

"Yes, Miss Madlin, I fotched him here," confessed the trembling negro, his words shaken out of him as by an ague. "But 't was jest for a minute for him to git a look at little Marj Jack, dat he never had seed sence he was bawn. He was gwine right away agin as soon as he got one look, but you see he had cotched de fever an' was out o' his hade. Nobody did n't know he was gwine to be sick an' stay heah all dis time. I nuvver would 'a had nothin' to do wid it, if I had knowed."

"And Mrs. Manning knew who he was?" seeing her way clearer and clearer.

"'T was Miss Mannin' dat did eberything. She let de cap'n know by de newspapers an' de blockade runners all 'bout his wife and chile."

Madelaine groaned.

"Blind, blind, blind!"

"Miss Mannin' used ter lib wid de cap'n an' his his wife down to Fortress Monroe befo' de wah broke out. An' befo' de Lawd, Miss Madlin', nobody did n't mean no harm but jest ter let de little boy's daddy git one look at him befo' he got kilt in de wah," pleaded Daniel, wiping his eyes.

"Does Afra know?" seized with a new terror; for she could not count on this voluble woman's discretion.

"My Gawd, Miss Madlin, no! Afra, she jaw too

h. We 'd all been hung long ago ef she had knowed. ody did n't know but me an' Miss Mannin'."

Mrs. Manning keeps a secret well," said Madeline impatiently, more to herself than to Daniel.

Miss Mannin' was so skeered, she did n't dar to at me an' de cap'n. She never took Mars Jack time whar de cap'n was, she was so 'fraid folks d 'spec'."

rs. Key reflected bitterly that she had performed office for father and son.

How did you get the — the man here?"

You know, Miss Madlin, de inemy been mighty Richmon' lately, an' got hold o' heap o' our nig-

An' you see de ambulance man what fotched into town knowed me an' I knowed him."

I see, I see," said Madelaine, recognizing the posity of a negro smuggling a Yankee into a dead federate's uniform and into the town, and how h Southernners were at the mercy of their slaves. you know you have done a very dreadful thing?"

continued hesitatingly, puzzled how to reprove him bringing a Yankee to the house when she had cond at his escape. "Go! I will think what must be," hurriedly, hearing a movement in the house.

aniel got out of the room as quickly as possible. elaine was glad to be alone, to think over the al incredible events of the last few hours.

Jack the son of a Yankee soldier! Poor Aunt y!" was her first thought.

he facts elicited from the negro's trembling confes- gave her an insight into Hardwick's probable his- She could imagine a young married officer sta-

tioned at Fortress Monroe before the war being assigned active duty in a distant field on the breaking out of hostilities, and so obliged to leave his wife and unborn child. An hundred things might have happened, as had so often happened, to cut off communication between husband and wife until now, when the North was massing troops near Richmond. Her imagination filled out Daniel's hasty sketch almost exactly; and in after years she learned the details. Hardwick had been stationed at Fortress Monroe before the war, and had married a pretty girl in the neighboring town of Norfolk. When the war came, he had been obliged to leave her in Norfolk with her father. When the Federals took Norfolk, father and daughter went to Richmond, and there the father died. The young woman, under the ban of being a Federal officer's wife, was left penniless and friendless but for a faithful servant. This servant, the pretty English woman, Mrs. Manning, cleverly managed the rest, even to persuading a young Confederate soldier in Richmond on furlough and a lark, against the remonstrances of a comrade, to leave Jack at the Pritchards' door. Inexplicable mysteries, like authentic ghosts, often come to be explained in a simple, unghostly way.

Then Madelaine thought bitterly how destiny had shaped things for her against her struggling. She had honestly tried to escape the danger in which she found herself. She had kept out of Hardwick's way after he told her he loved her. She had wanted to go quite away from him, to get out of the very town in which he breathed, and had been prevented. Then to-night, — to-night when he had bent down and kissed her, she

was powerless to resist. She might have denounced him then and there as a Federal officer for taking advantage of her helplessness. A heroic woman would have denounced him. But she was not heroic. That kiss had filled her with ~~indignation~~, amazement, confusion, happiness!

She started to her feet burning with one great blush, as she heard the movement in the house again. It turned out to be Mr. Pritchard and his sister coming back from their visit to the Disneys. They had met the retiring wave of excitement in the street, and now burst into the room in a great flurry. Miss Patty's best bonnet, donned out of respect to Larry's *fiancée*, was all awry, and her little curls, blown out of all propriety, hung in disreputable strings over her eyes. Larry, with a very red face, rubbed his hands excitedly. Had they been indulging at the neighboring saloon, they could not have looked more shaken out of their ordinary correct appearing.

"My, my! Madelaine, what has happened?" cried Miss Patty, out of breath.

"What is it, Madelaine? What is it?" cried Larry. "Ever since Patty took that brat Jack into the house, something is always happening," trotting out his favorite grievance, and unconsciously touching the core of the matter. "First the blockade runner and that hussy Manning, and now this infernal row at my very door. As if a war was not bad enough, that a man should have all this trouble at home!"

Never before had Larry been so excited as to use language beyond the Scriptural yea and nay. He was thoroughly upset and out of temper.

"I hope it 's all over now, uncle," said Madelaine meekly when she could get in a word.

"I don't know why it should have begun," said Larry, getting out of his overcoat tempestuously. "I never was so hustled in my life. What did those wretches mean by yelling for a Yankee round my house?"

"O Madelaine," whispered Miss Patty, with tears in her eyes, while Madelaine helped her off with her bonnet, her own hands too tremulous to untie the strings, "was ever anybody who loved their country as we do so tormented with suspicions? Now that Mrs. Manning has gone, what can they mean? That angry crowd frightened me so!"

"I know, aunt, I know. It was very terrifying, but it 's all over now."

"Do you know what they wanted?" asked uncle and aunt in a breath.

"Yes; two young officers came in" —

"Came in? Came into *this* house?" interrupted Larry.

"And you *saw* them?" asked Miss Patty.

"Yes."

"And what did they want?" in a breath.

"They said they came to search for a Yankee soldier."

"*Here?*" cried both.

"Yes. They had got hold of a rumor that there was one here ill or pretending to be."

"And did you tell them the only Yankee we had was a Georgian?" asked Larry indignantly.

"No, I let them search for themselves."

"You did? I hope they found Hardwick for their pains."

"They saw Captain Hardwick," stooping to pick up her aunt's gloves.

"Patty," said Larry, turning on his sister again, "I believe if you had never brought the boy and the suspected woman Manning into the house we should not have had this persecution. It all comes from that woman."

"Mrs. Manning certainly seems to have been a Jonah," agreed Miss Patty humbly.

Madelaine had not only to endure her uncle's pettish surmises, which came so terrifyingly near the truth, but endless eager questioning from him and Miss Patty. All of which, in some way marvelous to herself, she was able to answer simply and truthfully without betraying Hardwick. It seemed incredible that they did not read in her face what was written large all over her consciousness. She was still vibrating with the shock of a discovery, the terror of betrayal, the thrill of a caress from firm and tender lips, and above all, shame that this last had, for a moment, given her more happiness than she had ever, yes, ever, known. She felt abased as a traitor to her past, present, and future, to her country and her God.

That she should be trembling with all this emotion, which she felt glowing in her eyes and burning on her cheeks, unperceived by her uncle and aunt, was as if they were blind in a flood of light. To carry herself with apparent calmness through this experience was a hard strain upon her tact and endurance. She thought the time would never come for Larry and Miss Patty

to go to bed ; and all the while she was how best to enlighten her aunt as to th  
Hardwick was gone, and that he was no federate soldier !

The old lady was so agitated, it seemed a her another shock that night. Madelain long breath as she decided to wait until m was a reprieve for her aunt and herself.



## XXIII.

### THE DEWDROP ON THE ROSE.

SOON after breakfast the next morning, before Miss Patty had learned that Hardwick was gone, Madelaine, having taken precautions that she should be the first to tell her, went into the nursery, where the old lady was looking after Jack, who was growing and adding words to his vocabulary every day. He was being dressed to go out, and while the nurse got ready to accompany him, Miss Patty gave the finishing touch to his toilet by putting on his army overcoat and cap. It was something of a job to get the roistering child into his clothes. He was beginning to feel his strength and the all over boyish delight in resisting authority. He plunged and kicked and roared and squealed with native naughtiness, while Miss Patty, secretly rejoicing in his strength of wind and limb, tried to get his chubby arms into his sleeves. The coat with its artillery trappings was always a bone of contention. Its red lining and bright buttons seemed to suggest to Jack that it was something to play with, and not to wear. The legend on its buttons, *Sic semper tyrannis*, he carried out as far as he could in trying to get the better of Miss Patty. The scuffle between the big-lunged, strong-fisted baby and the gentle old spinster always

amused Madelaine. Jack went at it with his hands, heels, and few sharp white teeth, while Patty tried to parry his lunges with her little wit hands and purring entreaties. It is proverbially to teach old dogs new tricks, and Miss Patty's talk, like other languages learned late in life, although satisfactory to herself, was a halting performance never failed to make Madelaine laugh. The pale with which she listened to it on this occasion was ghost of her usual merriment. Since yesterday the of view had altered, as if life had suddenly changed front and shown a different face. Jack, to whose derful beauty she now held the key, and though self blind not to have perceived its origin by Jack's father, whom she had believed to be a soldier fighting for the South; Miss Patty, whose passion soul rejoiced in the conviction that she was rear champion for the sacred cause, had all changed tions. Even the little Confederate coat, into which Miss Patty had stitched so much love and loyalty a ghastly mistake.

"Hold still, deary, and let me put on your itty her aunt was saying, when she entered, unperceived Jack, to prevent his arms being captured, had thrust them round the old lady's neck, and squeezing inured her, body and soul. The touch of his little and baby face, pressed like a cool, fresh flower against her faded cheek, was sweeter than a lover's. She in no hurry to be released, but thought it proper to postulate.

"Come, now, and put it on for Aunt Patty. ] real boomerladdie's toat like your father's.

“ ‘ My daddy ’s a soldier,  
My mammy ’s a queen, ’ ” —

her quavering voice breaking into song over the nursery distich, which Jack must have found irresistibly funny, for he showed all his teeth, and squealed like a pig with delight.

She caught sight of Mrs. Key, although too preoccupied to notice her pale, grave face.

“ Come, Madelaine, and help me to get this rascal into his coat. He makes me waste more time than enough. I have n’t seen after my other charge, Captain Hardwick, this morning. Last night, I was so upset by the row, I did n’t even ask about him. Have you heard how he is to-day ? ”

“ Not to-day.”

Miss Patty looked up.

“ Why, what’s the matter ? Has anything happened ? ”

Mrs. Key went and knelt down by her aunt, and involuntarily kissed the beautiful child on her lap. Then she blushed, and drew back as if a bee had stung her. Even kissing Jack had come to have a new meaning. The sight of his broad, masterful brow and the curve of his perfect lips made her feel as if she were committing a great sin in miniature.

“ Take care, boy ! ” cried Miss Patty to Jack, who was plunging as if he wanted to touch his head with his heels. “ Did you ever see anything so strong ? I hope his ‘ father in the field ’ fights as well.”

“ Aunt,” softly whispered Madelaine, to whom the situation became every moment more trying, “ I came to tell you about Captain Hardwick.”

"Why, is he any worse to-day?"

"No," said Madelaine very slowly, endeavoring to divulge the truth as gently as possible, while her firm hands got Jack into his coat before he knew it. "Captain Hardwick felt better last night, and came down into the parlor for a while."

"You don't say so. Then he must have felt much stronger than when I left him. But you look so grave about it. Did it hurt him in any way?"

"No — that is, I think not. But he has gone away."

"Gone away?" echoed Miss Patty, bewildered and hurt, her heart still sore over Mrs. Manning's desertion. "I don't — don't understand. Why, he did n't even tell me good-by."

"I know, aunt, but he thought about you. He said he was afraid you could never forgive him."

Their voices had become so grave and preoccupied that Jack with his clear, innocent eyes looked from one to the other, wondering why he was all of a sudden forgotten. His coat ceased to be of interest now there was no one to fight with him about it.

"Why did he do it, then?" asked Miss Patty, in a grieved tone.

"He was obliged to go, aunt. It was a matter of life and death."

"Ill as he is, I think it was a matter of certain death to go. The doctors had not pronounced him out of danger."

"It was more dangerous to stay." Madelaine's low, significant tone sent a chill to Miss Patty's heart. Her face paled with undefined dread.

"Madelaine, my child," she said with trembling lip,

"I don't understand. Don't keep me in suspense. What has happened?"

Madelaine buried her face in her aunt's shoulder, and Jack seized her soft hair as a new plaything.

"Aunt, I don't know how to tell you. I am afraid you will never forgive me, either."

Miss Patty's face became more and more perplexed, and her heart throbbed more and more anxiously. She prayed for patience and waited.

"Aunt," began Madelaine again, "you know the mob round the house calling for a Yankee spy?"

"Oh, yes," wearily.

"It was Captain Hardwick they wanted."

Miss Patty breathed a sigh of relief. She even laughed.

"Captain Hardwick a spy? A Georgian a Yankee? That's a good joke!"

Madelaine groaned. It was even harder than she thought.

"Aunt dear," drawing the old lady's gray head down to hers, "we have been deceived, or rather mistaken. Captain Hardwick is not a Georgian."

"Nonsense! Have n't I letters from his mother and sisters in Augusta?"

"Yes, dear, there was a Captain Hardwick, but" —

"But?" more and more agitated.

"This is not the man."

Miss Patty looked petrified. For some minutes she could not speak. Could the young fellow upon whom she had lavished so much kindness be an impostor? she was thinking sadly. Even now she was far from suspecting the truth.

"He's at least a soldier, isn't he?" in a faint voice.

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"He is — Aunt, the mob was right," sobbed Madelaine, heart-broken to give another blow to the old lady whose tender-heartedness had been so imposed upon.

It was some time before Miss Patty grasped her meaning.

"The — mob — was — right," she repeated mechanically, becoming very pale. Then, as the truth began to dawn upon her, the light went out of her eyes and the sunny old face looked gray and haggard. "Madelaine," she said, in a voice so changed and horror-stricken that Madelaine would not have recognized it, and Jack began to whimper, — "Madelaine, do you mean — *can* you mean," pleadingly, with a remnant of hope, "that the man is a Yankee spy?"

Madelaine threw her arms round her aunt, murmuring in a voice choked with tears, —

"Yes, aunt, he is a Yankee, a Federal officer, but not a spy; oh, believe me, not a spy!"

"Then, in God's name, what was he doing here?" placing a trembling hand on Jack's innocent head to be sure that something true was left her. The movement pierced Madelaine's heart afresh. Every step, like walking over burning ploughshares, was more agonizing.

"O aunt, you will understand, — you, who are so loving, will understand, — when I tell you he came for love."

The blood rushed to Miss Patty's face. This was the last straw.

"Love!" she cried, with the terrible wrath of gentleness. "God forgive me! but it is not love a Yankee soldier will find in my house. *Love?*" her thoughts taking a new turn. Nothing now was too horrible to suppose. "Love for whom? Was it for Mrs. Manning? Do you mean to say there were *two* Yankee spies under my roof, eating my bread, betraying my friendship" —

It was Madelaine's turn to blush, which she did furiously.

"Aunt, you forget. Mrs. Manning is a married woman. I could not urge that kind of thing as an extenuation of his imprudence."

"Imprudence!" gasped Miss Patty. "Madelaine, are you insane, or am I, that I should hear you speak of treachery as imprudence? You know," with a painful catch in her voice, "how I have loved that young man; how I have denied myself that he might have things to win him to eat and medicine worth a hundred times its weight in gold; how I have watched by his bed night and day, and plead with God that he might not die."

"I know, aunt, I know," said Madelaine, in a low, faltering voice, unconsciously pleading as for herself; "but you would have done it all the same if you had known. You could never forget the command, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him,' nor who it is that said, 'Pray for them who despitefully use you.'"

"*My* enemy, yes, but this man is my country's enemy; and he came — he came in the guise of a friend. Love? You say he came for love. Do men come into a land for love with fire and sword? Tell me, in

God's name, what love he came for, and I will try to understand."

This was the hardest part of Madelaine's task. The old lady, who held fast to the frightened child, was terribly shaken. Painful excitement seemed to have done the work of years. She was frightfully pale and tremulous, and spoke with difficulty.

Madelaine did not know how to begin. Finally, she put her hand under Jack's chin and raised his face until they both looked down upon it. Big tears stood in his eyes and his lips quivered. He looked so troubled that Miss Patty's face softened.

"Yes, I love the child, and I hope I shall have left the world before he is old enough to be ungrateful. But what has this got to do with the matter?" impatiently.

"You love him so much that if I were to take him away with me into the country, you would come after him, would n't you?"

"Yes, Madelaine, yes, I believe I should; but don't torture me with suspense. Why talk about Jack, whom I have safe in my arms and who can never be a Yankee, when I want to know about the man who has laid me open to the charge of harboring a Yankee spy?"

Madelaine groaned.

"O aunt," she sobbed, "why will you not understand? Why are you so single-hearted and unsuspicious that you can never see anything not directly under your eyes? I am trying to lead you to see that if for love you would follow Jack into the country, one who loves him more than you do would seek him here."



"Madelaine!"

"Captain Hardwick was not a spy," rising and standing before her aunt with clasped hands. "He came here not for treachery, but for the great love a father bears his son."

"Madelaine!"

"O aunt, don't look so! You frighten me! See, Jack is frightened too!" Miss Pritchard rose and tremblingly placed the boy on the floor, and brushed her dress where he had come in contact with it.

The child, believing he was being punished, began to cry, and stretching out his hands sobbed, "Be dood, be dood," his baby formula of penitence for sins known and unknown.

Miss Patty's face quivered for a moment and then became rigid. She turned her head resolutely away from the child, whose brimming eyes and heaving breast showed how his baby heart was grieved. Misery seemed to have frozen love and pity out of her cold glance. Madelaine, awed to see the gentle, loving woman turned suddenly as if to stone, cried, —

"Dear aunt!"

"Madelaine," not heeding the cry, "how did the man escape?"

Madelaine slipped to the floor, and clasping her aunt round the knees, confessed; and no confessional ever witnessed a harder soul struggle than hers to say, —

"Aunt, I helped him to escape."

Miss Patty shrank away from her niece, and drew her skirts aside as if from contamination.

"Let me pass, please."

Her tone was so cold and hard that Madelaine rose,

staggering as from a blow. Grieved and trembling, she stood aside to let her aunt pass. Just then the nurse came back. Miss Patty turned to her.

"Ellen, take that coat off the boy, and put on his other one."

Ellen looked astonished. She had never heard Miss Patty speak of Jack without an endearing epithet or a softening of the voice. She saw that something serious was the matter and proceeded to obey without delay.

When Jack, with many tears and struggles, had been divested of his Confederate coat, Miss Patty took it. It was still warm from his body and fragrant with the odor of violets kept among his clothing. Miss Patty turned a shade paler. The warmth and fragrance nearly upset her stony composure. Her countenance, all broken up, quivered for a moment between tears and smiles that were sadder than tears. Then catching sight of the buttons on the coat, she was suddenly reminded of what she had nearly forgotten, the Yankee button in Jack's hand the night he was found.

She rallied immediately ; with a catch in her breath, she bravely folded up the little garment which had been the sign of so many hopes, and took it with her.

She had never before left Jack without a smile and a kiss. He did not understand why she should do so now. He held out his hands toward the door after she had gone, crying "Be dood, be dood," tears running over his face clear and bright like morning dew, soon to be dried. The tears wrung from her aged eyes by disappointed hopes were like November rain falling on sodden earth and withered leaves.

## XXIV.

### ONE CHANCE IN A HUNDRED.

THE shock of Madelaine's intelligence, gently as she tried to break it, proved too much for her aunt, who had not been well for some time. Miss Patty's pride gave way when she got to her own room and shut herself in. There she wept bitterly. Her life had been full of disappointed hopes, but this last was the bitterest because she felt it was the last. The sapless branch does not put forth new shoots, nor the aged heart new hopes. The spring of life was gone. The old lady kept her bed for some days, and Madelaine thought she was going to die. But she struggled back to life again, although she was never quite the same afterward. It was agreed between Madelaine and herself that the matter should not be spoken of again. What had been done could not be undone, and further notoriety would only make matters worse.

Even Larry was not informed until long afterwards that there had really been a Yankee officer in the house. The affair, which was so serious to a few, soon became of small importance beside events which concerned the destiny of nations. Miss Patty decided that as she had promised God and herself to take care of the child until the war ended, it was her duty to fulfill the promise. But it was with a difference. The

boy who had been her pride and joy in the present and hope for the future was now the source of keenest anguish, none the less that she could not help loving him. Her heart had been pierced in its tenderest spot. She did not go to his nursery now, nor caress him, nor call him by endearing names, although her poor old heart ached at the privation. She was kind and patient and generous to Jack, but she could not forget that his father, whom she had so long believed to be fighting for the cause, was fighting against it.

Not many days passed after Hardwick's escape before the opening of May. May, the month of mildness and bloom, of renewed life and springing hopes, came round again, bringing the battle of Chancellorsville and the death of Stonewall Jackson. There, a great blow fell which took the flavor from victory. Its shock was felt wherever the English tongue tells the story of valor or recounts the heroes of the English-speaking race. At Richmond, it pierced the nation's heart, and the South mourned as if in every house the firstborn lay dead. "There was a great cry throughout the land, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more." It was as if the pillar of fire which led the children of Israel had been extinguished, leaving them without light and without hope.

The day arrived when all that was mortal of the great soldier was borne through Richmond on its way to burial in his mountain home. The whole town followed his bier, and every man felt himself to be chief mourner. The people's grief, too deep for words, was hushed as if a pall had fallen over the town. The


moving mass of mourners was mute as if the dumb followed the dead.

Will any one who mingled in that train ever forget the silence which told a nation's sorrow? — silence broken only at intervals by the wail and blare of a funeral march. There was no elaborate ceremonial. There had been little time or heart for trappings. But no pageant ever touched the fountain of tears like that outpouring of a heart-broken people. There was no military pomp beyond a remnant of soldiers too maimed and broken for active service. More rags than pennons fluttered in the soft May air. Jackson's riderless horse, immediately behind his master's body, bore his faded overcoat with his sword and pistols. Every heart swelled and every eye filled afresh at sight of that faithful companion. With bowed head and pawing hoof, he seemed to feel he would never again bear his master, never again thrill with him in the shock of battle, nor in the fierce joy of victory. It was the time of buds and blossoms. Nature presented one of those sharp contrasts to human feeling which so often seems to mock at human woe. Never had Richmond looked more lovely than on the fair May day when Jackson's body, having been borne to the capitol, lay beneath the dome, where it was visited by a ceaseless throng of mourners from morning until sunset. Never has a face been so impressed on memory as his on at least one of those who pressed round his bier, to look at him for the first and last time, — a strong and noble face, darkly sunburned below the brows, fair and smooth as a child's where his forehead had been protected by his soldier's cap. His counte-

nance bespoke perfect repose, but even death failed to conquer the indomitable expression of his firm lips and iron jaw. We felt that we were looking upon a hero, one of the world's heroes, one of God's heroes. Everybody who came brought flowers as tokens of love, and, as they were dropped silently upon the warrior's breast and about his bier, the mound grew and grew like an ancient cairn, and when the sun went down we left him sleeping, covered with all that was sweetest and loveliest of the luxuriant May.

Besides the great calamity that befell the nation at Chancellorsville, like all battles it sent bereavement to many hearts and clothed many homes in mourning. Another blow in less degree than the death of Jackson was the loss of his brilliant young chief of artillery, Hugh Dallas. Among the ghastly mistakes at Chancellorsville, he, being badly wounded and left for dead on the field, was taken prisoner. As soon as this news reached Mrs. Key, she decided to make an effort to go to him at all risks. She had always wanted to do something for him, to show him how much she cared for him, and here was an opportunity to testify her loyalty and devotion. She could not do less for the man whom she intended to marry, and who but for an accident would even now be her husband, than she had done for the stranger Hardwick.


She was so bent on carrying out her intention, and so sure her family would consider it quixotic and try to dissuade her from it, that she did not mention it to them until all her arrangements were made. She learned that Dallas had been taken with other prisoners to Washington. To reach him would require a



long, roundabout, perilous journey. The difficulties in the way made her more determined.

She would have to run the blockade, following the ignoble army of martyrs who drove a thriving trade, and fattened on the necessities of the people.

With more than one river to cross, and several counties of weary Virginia mud to drag through in springless wagons and dirty oxcarts; with having to dodge the movements of the enemy, and satisfy detective custom officers, Mrs. Key had a wretched and depressing journey. At last, one stormy night, in the small hours towards morning, she arrived at a place called Blackford's Ferry, from whence she was to cross the Potomac. It was one of the regular ports of entry opened by blockade runners, but it happened that on this occasion there were no departures from the Virginia side. It appeared that Mrs. Key was to cross the river alone in an open boat, rowed by two negroes. For the first time, her heart failed her. There was only one dwelling-house at Blackford's Ferry, a sort of tavern, where she stopped to get something to eat. The proprietor she found to be a foreigner, a swarthy, hook-nosed Spaniard, with the disreputable, well-oiled look that southern Europeans attain to when in America they aspire to be called gentlemen, — a type with which an American woman is never in sympathy. Mrs. Key flinched when she saw the kind of person she had to deal with. What at a little distance might have passed for flashy good looks became altogether sinister on a nearer view. One of the man's dark eyes was evidently artificial, and helped to make his countenance forbidding. This still, glassy eye seemed all the more



still and glassy from the excessive vivacity of the other. It was another lively illustration of the quick and the dead. Mrs. Key shuddered when the quick, with evident admiration, concentrated its gaze on her, while its lifeless fellow stared blankly at the wall beyond her. He evidently mistook her for one of the women blockade runners, who vied with the men in the profitable pursuit of smuggling. The alternative was presented of remaining at this place until morning, or crossing the wide, dark river on a stormy night, with only two negro oarsmen as companions. She decided on the latter. It seemed the less disagreeable of the two, and she was feverishly anxious to get on. Every moment counted.

She was drinking a cup of coffee before embarking, when her attention was arrested by a few words between the Spaniard and a negro wagon-driver, who, whip in hand, appeared at the door. From what the latter said, she learned that she was to have a fellow-passenger.

Some one who had just arrived desired to cross the river at once, and wanted to know if there would be room in the boat about to start.

Mrs. Key's spirits sensibly lightened at this news. She devoutly wished the passenger would prove to be a woman. The women she had encountered on her way had been less objectionable than the men. She was disappointed in her hope. A masculine tread on the outside steps made her draw down her veil, and the next moment the man whom she still thought of as Hardwick entered. Her heart leaped into her throat and then seemed to stand still. Heavily veiled, and



enveloped in an old-fashioned cloak of her father's, she looked as impersonal as a lay figure; but as it was the lay figure of a woman, Hardwick took off his hat. A flaring, ill-smelling oil-lamp in the room lit up his curly head and high-bred features in as vivid contrast to the dark, greasy countenance of the proprietor, who seemed never to take off his sheeny hat, as if they had been representatives of two different worlds. Hardwick, who had got rid of his Confederate uniform and wore citizen's dress, was still pale and thin from his recent illness; so pale that Mrs. Key thought he must have just risen from a sick-bed. Fortune had favored him since they parted, for, like herself, he had arrived at the last stage of running the blockade. Once across the Potomac, and he was in the Union. The proprietor having extorted from him an exorbitant sum for getting him across the river, Hardwick turned to leave the room. Mrs. Key rose and began pulling on her gloves. Her hands, emerging from her cloak, were fair and beautiful as lilies against her black dress. Their gleaming whiteness caught the eyes of both men. Hardwick glanced away. The Spaniard's glittering eye feasted on their beauty as long as they were visible.

The boat landing was a hundred yards off. The night was dark, and it was raining. The negro boatmen were called, and one with a lantern led the way. Hardwick and Mrs. Key, side by side, followed silently over the mud and stones of a wretched footpath. They were in the flattest of flat countries. The earth around them stretched away in illimitable fields of darkness to where a dull gray line indicated the hori-

zon. The wind blew in gusts, and the sky was black with scudding clouds. Before them the lantern, swaying with the negro's rolling gait, threw now here, now there, patches of light more bewildering than darkness. Once Mrs. Key stumbled, and would have fallen but for Hardwick's helping hand. Under her cloak and veil she trembled and shivered, and wondered how long she would be able to keep herself unknown to him. It seemed strange that the very beating of her heart did not betray her. The memory of his kiss was like a drawn sword between her and him. It made it impossible for them to be on the plane of ordinary acquaintances.

As long as it seemed certain they would never meet again, that daring kiss was only a memory whose delight was dead and impotent as the perfume of last year's roses. Now that they were together, it was regenerate and full of the far-reaching possibilities of life. Madelaine hated him for that kiss.

She felt herself in a horribly painful position. As she wended her weary way over the stony path, she wondered if there had ever before been such a combination of circumstances. She prayed that she might not betray herself until they reached the other side, when Hardwick would go his way and she hers; and he would never know she had been so near to him. It would be almost miraculous to do this, but she would strive for it with all the power of which she was capable.

## XXV.

### ENEMIES.

WHEN Hardwick and Mrs. Key had taken their places in the stern of the little boat, which danced like a cockle shell on the rough water, Mrs. Key felt more secure. Although they sat side by side, it seemed possible to make the other shore without betraying herself. There was no occasion to speak. Hardwick was absorbed in meditation. The night seemed darker the farther the boat, with muffled oars, pushed from shore. Madelaine sat motionless, looking steadily through her veil in the direction of the opposite shore, which they approached but slowly. Blockade running required infinite caution in eluding suspicious craft, of which the Potomac was full. At another time, she would have probably been alive to the dangers of the passage. Now, she was intent only on preserving her disguise. A stormy night, turbulent water, and revenue cutters were nothing to her fear of being recognized. She sat trembling, conscious only of a desire not to be discovered, when suddenly the oars paused and the boat stood still. A great rush of water swirled and foamed, white as snow, about them. Overhead appeared a gigantic shape, as if the night had evolved something blacker, denser, more terrible, than itself. Simultaneously from the throats of Hardwick and the negroes burst a deafening cry, —

"Starboard, hard down!"

The shape, the bowsprit of a great schooner, swerved aside at the command, and the water heaving round her nearly upset the rowboat. Madelaine, frightened out of her senses, started to her feet. Another lurch would have sent her overboard, but that Hardwick caught her by the wrist.

"Mrs. Key," alarmed by her hairbreadth escape, "you must not do that!" replacing her in her seat with a strong hand.

"You know me? You knew me all the time? Oh, how could that be?" she cried piteously.

Her silence, her motionlessness, her stifling veil, had been to no purpose.

"I knew your hands," said Hardwick quietly, resuming his place.

"My hands?" holding them up, encased in clumsy, home-made gloves, and regarding them as if they had been two black traitors.

"Yes;" forcing himself to speak in quiet, level tones so as not to attract the attention of the rowers, but whose repression made them all the more resonant and significant to Madelaine. "Did you think I could forget them? Your hands that day after day gave me to eat and to drink, cooled my forehead, smoothed my pillow, did everything for me? How could I forget? I know every line of them. I should know them in Africa."

"I am sorry," clasping her knees and looking disconsolately towards the distant shore. "I ought not to have taken off my gloves."

"If I had not seen your hands, I should still have recognized your walk, Mrs. Key. As you walked

across the floor of that dirty tavern with that beast of a tavern-keeper watching you, you reminded me of Romola. Brigida, or somebody in the book, says, 'Let Romola muffle herself as she will, she cannot disguise herself, for she has that way of walking like a procession.'

"I am sorry," repeated Madelaine, removing her veil, glad to get a free breath of air, her eyes still looking over the rough water to where a dark line indicated the shore of Maryland.

Hardwick, in the murkiness of the night, could just see the fair oval of her face shining out from her black wrappings as he said, —

"I don't see why you should be sorry, my sister." Madelaine started. "I may be of use to you on the other side. You called me brother in the Confederacy, and I will make good the claim in the Union. All that a brother can do, I will."

"I did not call you brother for my benefit," coldly.

"No, it was for mine," — Madelaine winced, — "and that makes the obligation all the more sacred. May I ask why you are going across?"

"To nurse, if I'm allowed, a Confederate prisoner, badly wounded."

"Your brother?"

"Not my brother."

Hardwick colored in the darkness. "Forgive me; I did not mean to be curious, I was only interested."

"There is no need for forgiveness. It was a quite natural supposition; but he is more than a brother, he is the man I'm going to marry," she said steadily, glad to define her position.

To Hardwick, her reply was as incisive as a sword-thrust. For a moment he felt transfixed. He neither moved nor spoke.

In the darkness, Madelaine was conscious of the change that came over him. She knew just the look of pain and hopelessness that came into his eyes. He could not know her hands as she knew his eyes.

Hardwick recovered in a moment. He was no longer an ill man to whimper as a sick girl, like Cæsar when the fever was upon him. The wound was to the marrow, but he found his voice.

"My sister," — he began, delicately emphasizing the relationship.

"Captain Hardwick," seeing he paused.

"Not Hardwick," he said humbly. "Would you care to know my real name?"

"I should prefer not to call you by the name of a gallant soldier who died fighting for the South."

Hardwick bit his lip. It was a hard fate that made this woman technically his enemy. He loved her so, and she dealt such cruel blows.

"It is natural you should feel so," he said gently, "and I want to tell you that my name is John Dorset, — Major Dorset in the army, Jack Dorset at home."

Madelaine shivered. She was conscious of regret at the change. She had so rejoiced in rescuing the man Hardwick from death that his life seemed to have become part of hers. Now, everything was changed. Even the familiar household name, so constantly on her lips during his illness, was associated with a dead man, not a living one. "Major Dorset," she said, and he too felt chilled by the change. Something which had been would be no more.

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The name of Hardwick in his mind was connected with long, delicious days of convalescence, when he had nothing to do but live, and the golden hours were made up of seeing Mrs. Key's face, watching her movements, and waiting for and listening to her voice.

"Mrs. Key," he resumed, "on the other side I shall be able to help you as a sister."

"I can't believe," interrupted Madelaine, "that any good will come of my pretending to be what I am not."

"And yet you saved my life by pretending for half an hour to be my sister."

It was Mrs. Key's turn to blush under cover of the night. She was silent so long that Dorset said humbly, —

"I'm afraid you think no good came of that?"

"That was a wild impulse of the moment," ignoring the interrogation. "This would be premeditation."

"You think to save a man's life, like killing a man, from impulse is to be less guilty than to do it with premeditation?" bitterly.

"Yes."

"Mrs. Key, you say very cruel things."

"I'm in a very cruel position," impatiently. "Who could have foreseen our meeting again? The wildest imagination could not have supposed it possible."

"And yet as we are bound for the same place, there was one chance in a hundred that we should go together; and that chance has been mine."

## XXVI.

### A FIERY FURNACE.

WHEN the boat, having escaped the perils of weather, collision, and seizure, arrived at the landing on the Maryland side, Mrs. Key's difficulties, so far from being at an end as she had hoped, where Dorset was concerned, seemed only to have begun. It was raining steadily, and the wretched place where they disembarked was debatable ground, which at times harbored Southern blockade runners, and at others was exposed to the fire of Federal guns. A late manoeuvre had brought it to this last condition. The few houses which composed the village seemed deserted. The night was dark, and not a living creature was in sight. The boatmen, having deposited the passengers and their slender baggage, lost no time in turning about and making for Blackford's Ferry.

Major Dorset and Mrs. Key were left alone in a strange place, not knowing where to go, and with no means of getting on. Mrs. Key rose to the occasion.

"Major Dorset," she said, in tones which bore no trace of timidity or anxiety, "had n't you better leave me here with the bags, while you go and see if you can't find some place of shelter?"

Dorset was relieved that she took the matter so pluckily.



"No," he said, in the same matter-of-fact way, "I'm afraid to leave you alone. I will take the bags, and we will go together and look for shelter. I'm afraid you are very wet."

"Only my face. My cloak has protected me otherwise."

Together they went to the nearest and what seemed the principal house in the place, and found it locked and empty, but there was a small portico in front on which were one or two rude chairs. Dorset was glad to find even this much protection for Mrs. Key. He took the rain from her cloak, moved one of the chairs to the corner most sheltered from rain and wind, and laced a traveling bag under her feet. Then he left her, to reconnoitre the other shanties scattered along the road straggling away from the water. They were all deserted. The place was as desolate as Babylon, as deserted as a tomb. What was he to do?

He tried the door of each house, and found only one not locked. He entered this and struck a match. When his eyes had accommodated themselves to its feeble light, he discovered that the door had opened into a room, and in the room was an oil-lamp. He joyfully lighted this and, turning on the blaze to the full, set it in the window that Mrs. Key might see it. He felt encouraged. Things do not seem so bad when one can see. The room was bare and cheerless, but it was weather-tight, and there were some chairs. Better than all, there was a fireplace, and in a corner were some sticks of wood. With the aid of his matches and some papers scattered about, he started a fire. Then he tried the doors leading from the room he was

in, to see what accommodation the house afforded, and found to his dismay that they were locked and the keys gone. Evidently it was an oversight that the front door had been left unlocked. He was lucky to have the use of one room. He turned to go back to Mrs. Key. Crossing a little inclosure in front of the house, his footsteps or the light in the window startled from somewhere a hen, that scuttled across his path with flapping wings and uplifted voice. It was the only bit of life he encountered. When he got back to Mrs. Key, she sprang to meet him, her voice almost joyous with relief.

"Oh, that light has made me so glad! You have waked up somebody?"

Dorset's heart sank. It would not do to dash her spirits. There was need for all her courage.

He answered cheerfully, even playfully, "Yes, I waked up one indignant female, who cackled her resentment at being roused."

"A woman? Thank God!" Then, abashed at her warmth, "It seems more helpful to have a woman about. Don't you think so?" nervously.

"Of course it does."

"How warm and bright the windows look! Is there a fire there? How I long to get to a fire!" shivering. "And you? You are thoroughly wet. You will be glad, too."

When they reached the house and Dorset flung open the door, it was a blessed relief to step from the cold, wet night into a warm, bright room. Mrs. Key threw aside her cloak, and went and knelt before the fire, spreading out her hands to the blaze.

"Thank God for shelter," she said, her heart filled to bursting.

Dorset stood by and warmed his hands. Mrs. Key, looking up at him, saw with compunction how soaking wet were his clothes and how delicate he still looked.

"This exposure is not good for you," she said, moved by the old care-taking spirit with which she had nursed Hardwick.

"Oh, I'm all right, if I can only make you comfortable."

"I shall get dry and warm in a little while. But where is the old woman?" asked Mrs. Key, rising and removing her bonnet and veil, which were dripping with rain.

"The old woman?" returned Dorset. "She went to bed again, and intimated she did not wish to be roused."

"Sha'n't I see her to-night?" anxiously.

"I'm afraid not. The doors are locked;" going to the doors and demonstrating that they could not be opened.

Mrs. Key turned pale.

"How inhospitable! Did you tell her a lady was with you?"

Dorset was sorely puzzled.

"I saw her only for a moment. She disappeared so quickly, I did not have time to say anything," he stammered.

"And I shall have to stay here until morning?"

"I'm afraid so, Mrs. Key; but things are not so bad as they might be," he said encouragingly. "I thought at first you would have to spend the night on the

portico. It is something to have a roof over your head and light and fire."

"I suppose I ought to be very thankful," with a catch in her breath.

Her courage was beginning to ooze out.

"Soldiering and blockade running require more endurance than courage," said Dorset more cheerfully than he felt. He was suffering for Mrs. Key all that she suffered, with infinite compassion and tenderness besides. "We shall have to bring our imagination to the position. It's a great lightener of things. We can imagine that this is a station house, and having missed our train we are waiting for the next. I have had to wait hours in that way. This is only a variation of the same kind of annoyance. We shall get help in the morning. It will not be long now."

His hopeful words and bright, unembarrassed manner went far towards relieving the situation.

Mrs. Key, conscious of the tremor in her voice, could not trust herself to speak.

Their positions had changed since last they sat together by a fireside. Then, she was protector and guardian. Now, that rôle belonged to Dorset, who felt that he would repay the debt, if need be, with his life.

Mrs. Key's cheeks were flushed by the fire; her rain-drenched hair was beginning, in the warm atmosphere, to wave in soft rings round her face; her hands lay dejectedly in her lap; her eyes, humid with unshed tears, were bent on the glowing logs. She looked very young and fair and profoundly sad. Dorset did not know whether she was more lovely so, or when in

buoyant health and spirits she ministered to him in his illness.

"The last time I was detained on a journey," he continued, in an easy, pleasant manner, "there was a poor fellow with us on his way to be married. The train had been delayed by an accident several hours beyond the time appointed for the wedding. I never saw a more miserable man. What made matters worse, the lady had jilted another fellow to marry him."

"And don't you think she deserved some punishment for that?" asked Mrs. Key, forcing herself to take part in the conversation, as being less embarrassing than silence.

"Why, no, if she found she did not love the other fellow."

"In a solemn compact," said Mrs. Key, more interested, "is n't there a stage where one is not justified in receding from the obligation?"

Dorset hesitated before he answered; then, "In most things, yes."

"And not in the most important? It seems to me there would be no faith, or confidence, or personal honor in the world, if it were not so."

"But where the happiness of a woman's whole life is concerned?" urged Dorset.

"I know that is the plea always set up by jilts, men and women. But the other party's happiness? Is n't that to be considered? Besides, to be happy is not necessary," said Mrs. Key sadly, "but to do one's duty is."

"Mrs. Key, your ideal is very high."

"My ideal? It is n't mine. It is older than Christianity. David sang of the righteous man as one 'who sweareth unto his neighbor and disappointeth him not, even though it were to his own hindrance.' "

Mrs. Key spoke warmly. The subject, by a strange chance, was one on which circumstances had forced her to think and feel strongly. What she said was the result of much mental conflict. She was glad to say it as giving form to her convictions. In slippery places, one grasps more firmly one's support. Dorset did not pursue the subject. He felt the personal note in the discussion, and was afraid to trust himself to speak further. There was silence for a while. Then he said very humbly —

"Mrs. Key, there is one thing on my heart to ask you. Can you guess what it is? "

"About your child? "

"Yes. Is it well with Jack? "

"It is well with him," she answered simply, afraid in her turn to speak more fully on a topic involving so much personal feeling.

Tears rushed to Dorset's eyes. A lump in his throat prevented his replying, but he looked the thankfulness words could not express.

"How did you escape from Richmond? " said Madelaine presently, forgetting her constraint, to ask what she had wanted to know ever since the night she had given him his liberty.

Dorset reddened as he answered, "After you set me free, the Confederate uniform saved me. A good Samaritan of a parson found me faint and staggering in the street, and without asking any questions took me

to his home and had me cared for until I was well enough to walk. Then one morning I went away, and the uniform carried me outside the pickets. Once beyond these, I had n't much difficulty in finding people willing to help me to run the blockade. I discovered that I had been reported among the missing after the skirmish near Richmond, where Dahlgren and so many of our men were killed. When I get back to my command, it will be like one risen from the dead. My white face and bare bones will testify to my not having been in fighting condition, without a surgeon's certificate. I'm not half the man I was before that typhoid fever. You would not know me with my fighting weight, Mrs. Key."

Dorset, looking in her face, hoping to make her smile, saw her countenance change.

"What is that?" she cried, turning pale and stopping her ears. A whizzing, rushing sound filled the air. She had felt the concussion before she heard it. It was followed by a crash, as if a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet.

Dorset's lamp in the window had brought a Federal gun to bear on the blockade runners' nest. The birds of prey had flown; only a pair of innocent doves were caught in the snare.

A ball made a breach in the frail wooden walls, and before Madelaine could catch her breath, another burst into the room and fell, hot and smoking, a few yards from where she stood. She and Dorset looked at each other, their faces pale with despair. There did not seem a chance for their lives. It was a position to shake the stoutest heart. Madelaine trembled with

wild, womanly terror. Dorset trembled for her. He had the presence of mind to remove the lamp from the window and close the board shutters.

Madelaine, paralyzed with fright, looked with dumb instinct to Dorset for protection. Her frightened, pleading look moved him more than the guns.

"Lie down flat on the floor. It's your best chance," he cried, as a ball whizzed past the house.

Madelaine could not understand. She could not move.

He caught her by the waist and gently pulled her down. Light and color passed out of her face, and she slipped unresistingly to the floor. He saw that her terror was lost in unconsciousness. He stood between her and the direction whence the balls came, with a wild hope that they would pass through his body before they touched her. The firing continued. From time to time a ball whistled by the house, or struck a neighboring building.

Dorset, his heart contracted with agony, looked down on Madelaine, lying motionless as if cut in stone. Another ball, tearing up the earth near the house with a frightful noise, startled her to semi-consciousness. Her lips moved. Dorset knelt by her to catch her words.

"Hardwick!" she murmured.

"I am here," the words bursting from him in a great sob.

"Hardwick, don't leave me!" she pleaded piteously.

He wanted to gather her in his arms and soothe her like a frightened child. But he was under bonds. He was her protector. She was unconscious and helpless. It was like tearing flesh and spirit asunder, but she was



as safe from his caresses as if the ocean rolled between them.

"I will not leave you. We will die together," he cried brokenly.

"Yes, go, go! They will take you and hang you!" she rambled on, her thoughts drifting backward to the night of his escape.

"I am safe with you, dearest love," he groaned, remembering her care of him as he hung over her, his face haggard with the despair of love powerless to help.

"Love?" she echoed, looking terrified. "Is it a sin to love a Yankee? God knows I've tried not to."

"Sin? My God! her pure heart's blackest sin is to love a Yankee," was his soul's unuttered cry. He blushed to hear her secret thoughts, and in the face of what seemed certain death, he felt a thrill of joy.

"O Hugh, save me! save me!" she cried, as a ball shivered a tree near the house, trying to raise herself, and stretching out her hands for help.

Dorset caught them in his cold hands, his heart fluttering like a fettered bird.

The touch brought her to herself. Intelligence came slowly back to her eyes, a faint color suffused her face. "What has happened?" she asked, trying to rise.

A moment more and she remembered. "Ah, yes, the guns! Will they come again?" covering her ears with her hands.

"I hope not. I can't say. They have been coming more slowly."

These two, caught like rats in a trap, with the horrid din of combat about them without the sustaining excitement of resistance and defense, waited silently for death. Their souls were knit together as by fire, with a power unknown to joy.

The firing gradually ceased. When the dawn peeped in through the fissures in the walls and found them unharmed, untouched, they looked in each other's haggard faces and sobbed, "Thank God!"

That night's anguish left Dorset more shaken than a battle. The time in which they had endured such agony of suspense, and which seemed an eternity, was in reality about two hours. It was May, and day broke early. It was not more than four o'clock when the sun, which had gone down in sullen clouds and pitiless rain, began to flush the eastern sky like a May queen all smiles and roses.

In the first burst of thankfulness, Mrs. Key remembered the old woman, and thought how terrified she must have been during the bombardment. "Major Dorset, I think the poor old woman must have died of fright."

A half smile quivered on Dorset's lips. Nothing could have so relieved the tension of feeling as a provocation to smile.

"You are kind to think of her after her inhospitality."

"Don't you suppose she will come down now that it is day? I should like to see her. Inhospitable as she is, it was a comfort to know she was there."

Dorset looked at her with something of the pleading expression which had so puzzled her when, being

nursed as a Confederate, he tried tacitly to ask forgiveness for being a Yankee. She turned away. It was the expression which, from the first glance, had always discomposed her."

"Is she a comfort to you now?" he asked earnestly.

"Yes; why?" feeling that something was behind.

"I have a confession to make about that woman."

"What! Is n't she an *old* woman?"

"Did I say she was?"

"I don't know that you did, but I supposed she was. A young woman," wincing and blushing as she thought of her own case, "would not be apt to be here."

"You will not be afraid to stay here with the old woman, while I go and try to find something or somebody to take us away from this place? If I can't do better, I shall hoist a flag of distress on the shore," said Dorset, opening the door and windows to let in the light and breath of day.

"I'm not afraid," she said confidently. She was faint and jaded and hungry, but felt something of exhilaration at the sight of day after such a night.

It was a glorious morning. The rising sun painted the sky with saffron and gold. Trees and herbage glistened with rain-washed freshness. The great river danced and sparkled as if it never had been dark and sullen. In the distance, beyond a stretch of wood, a cloud of smoke hanging in the air betrayed the presence of a camp.

Madelaine stood in the door looking after Dorset as he went away, wishing the old woman would come down and give her the comfort of her company and

something to eat. Physical exhaustion was for the moment paramount to the distress and embarrassment of the situation.

Before Dorset reached the road, her quick ear caught the familiar, far-away sound of many hoofs, faint at first, for the roads were sodden from recent rains. Dorset's own footsteps prevented his perceiving it.

She called to him, agitated with a new anxiety. Evidently a body of horse approached. Would they prove friends or enemies? And in Dorset's company, who would be friends and who enemies? "Major Dorset!"

He turned back. Her voice and countenance betrayed fresh trouble.

"What is it, my sister?" he asked gently, full of tender concern for her forlorn condition, the difficulties of which increased every moment.

"Listen!" she said, raising her hand and holding her breath to hear.

The sound became every moment nearer and clearer. Dorset recognized the tramp of horse, and his countenance for a moment reflected the anxiety of hers. But he rallied immediately.

"The problem I was going to try and solve," he said cheerfully, "will be solved for us. Those horse-men must get us out of this hole."

He stood by her on the doorstep, shading his eyes from the sun as he looked towards the east, whence the sound of trotting hoofs proceeded. It was not long before they came. Half a dozen or more Federal cavalry, blue-coated, mud-splashed, dashed into the village, and drew up at the gate of the only occupied

house. One of them peremptorily demanded what Dorset and Mrs. Key were doing there.

Dorset explained that he was a Federal officer, trying to get back to his command after an illness in Confederate lines through which he had just escaped.

The spokesman laughed him to scorn. "What have you to show that you are a Federal officer? And the woman, is she one too?"

"This lady," said Dorset, furious at the man's brutality, "is my sister, who" —

"Well, she don't look much like you. And there's nothing Federal about *her*. She's secesh from her bonnet to her shoes. No, you are rebel smugglers, giving aid and comfort to the enemy, and the government wants to break up that kind of thing. I have orders to fire this place. As for you and your companion, you will be examined by the proper authorities. Is there anybody else in this hole?"

"You can search for yourself," said Dorset shortly, reddening as he caught Mrs. Key's glance. He knew she was thinking compassionately of the old woman.

"That would be better than to trust your evidence," said the cavalryman. Mrs. Key thought of all the horrors she had encountered in running the blockade, this man was the worst.

Two men were detailed to search the village for rebels before applying the torch. Two were sent to hunt up a vehicle to convey Major Dorset and Mrs. Key to Washington. Before the sun had advanced far on his journey, these two were on their way to the Federal capital as prisoners of war.

Before they left the village, they saw the soldiers,

after a hasty search for rebels, set fire to the house beginning with the one in which they had found shelter.

Mrs. Key turned to Dorset with a face of horror.

"The old woman!" she gasped. Dorset felt an inclination both to laugh and to cry, but he did neither.

"It was a comfort to you to feel she was there last night?" he asked gravely.

"Oh, yes!" breathless.

"It will be a comfort to know she is not there this morning?"

"Oh, yes."

"She is not there."

"What has become of her? I don't understand," he wondered.

"She was never there."

"Never there? And you"—

"Yes;" his blue eyes brilliant with mingled amusement and apology.

Mrs. Key looked away.

She hated lying, tacit and spoken, but somehow she loved that lie, and it scored another point for the liar.

## XXVII.

### MAY AND DECEMBER.

THE heavy rains Mrs. Key encountered during her blockade-running expedition were general, and made gloomy weather in Richmond as elsewhere.

One afternoon, during a steady downpour, Larry Pritchard was making a visit to his betrothed, Bo Disney. They were to be married in June, and not in May as Larry urged. Bo said the latter month was unlucky, adding mentally that it was lucky May was unlucky. Something might happen before June. The sky might fall and poor people catch larks, or foreign nations might recognize the Confederacy and honest folk come by their own again. However other women may conduct themselves in a similar position, Bo never complicated things by pretending that her engagement was anything but a matter of convenience. She thought that was bad enough without lying about it in word or manner. No marriage in France was ever arranged with a better understanding that it was a business affair. There was this saving clause which French marriages sometimes lack, that there was nothing in the past career of either party that forfeited confidence or respect. Poor Larry was not only good, but had incurred the mild odium of being goody. To his credit, this last characteristic had been greatly

remedied by the war and latterly by his engagement. When the world is tumbling about one's ears, one does not bother about anise and mint and cumin, and when a man's thoughts are wholly occupied with a beautiful and charming girl, self is apt to get into the background. The war and Bo Disney together had made Larry Pritchard more of a man than he had been any time since he attained his majority. They really made so much difference in his character and bearing that people began to drop the half-affectionate, half-belittling name of Larry and call him Mr. Pritchard. Bo's manner to him was the perfection of kind civility which a well-behaved young lady would adopt towards a lately found grandfather, and whatever throes of regret and baffled affection Mr. Pritchard may have experienced from this kind of association, he concealed under a very proper mask of grandfatherly deportment. There was fine instinct in this, for Bo had a restive temper, and anything more urgent would most likely have been fatal to the arrangement.

He did not look sentimental. He had large hands and feet, was bald-headed, and big in the girth. Coming in, he looked warm and moist after his walk, for the weather was sultry as well as damp.

"So you've come out in all this rain to see us," said Bo, including her mother in the attention, as she drew up one of the rickety chairs for her visitor.

"Mr. Pritchard knows the value of a visit on a rainy day," said Mrs. Disney suavely. "Bo and I have been yawning in each other's faces all the morning, and it's delightful to see a fresh face."

"Why should n't I come out in the rain?" said Mr.



Pritchard, inclined to resent its being anything extraordinary. "If I can stand the water trickling down my back on picket duty, I don't see why I can't hoist an umbrella and come and see a friend."

"You are prepared for either fire or water, are n't you?" said Mrs. Disney, with a sugary smile.

Life had been so much more comfortable, not to say beautiful, to the lady since Larry assumed the rôle of prospective son-in-law, that she bloomed out in his presence like four-o'clocks in the sun. She had had real coffee for breakfast, real wine for dinner; she sat in a well-cushioned chair that was not rickety; her work-table was decorated with roses. This in the Confederacy was to be a queen. Why should she not smile?

People said it was a pity Larry had not proposed to the mother instead of the daughter.

"I hope you are not to be on picket duty such a night as this?" said Bo kindly.

"Why not? It agrees with me wonderfully. I was never in better health," thumping his chest by way of proof, "than since I've been soldiering."

"You know Miss Patty says I must take care of you; that you can't take care of yourself, and that I can't begin too early."

Mr. Pritchard's moist, red face beamed all over at this sign of interest, and Mrs. Disney took occasion to go away.

"You are a good little girl, Bo, and when the war is over, you may take as much care of me as you like. Just now, I must do what an old fellow can to help what Patty calls 'the Cause.'"

"But you need n't have the water trickling down

your back. I've got mamma to make you a comforter," taking from her work-basket a scarf knit of coarse red wool. "I should have made it myself but for my lame hand. It's hideous, but I could n't get anything better to make it of," winding it round and round her slender throat to show how it was to be worn. her bright face rising like a pure flame from out the fiery red mass.

"It's the most beautiful thing I ever saw!" cried Larry enthusiastically.

Receiving it from her hands, he wound it round his throat, finding it a comforter indeed, warming his very heart. The effect was not good artistically. Its violent color, which heightened Bo's beauty, brought out his wrinkles and defects.

"It's tiptop. I shall feel as snug as a bug in a rug," he declared.

Bo turned away.

Life's rosy morning had faded into the light of common day. It required as much courage to face that fact as to storm a breach; and without the glory.

Larry did not tease her long with his presence. She was very gentle, very kind; kinder than she had ever been. As he was leaving, he stood for a moment undecided, looking red and bashful, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"Bo, would you do me a little favor?"

Bo knew what was coming. It was an old story. With frightened eyes she looked first at one door and then at the other, like a bird fluttering to escape.

"No, Mr. Pritchard, not a little one but a great one. Ask me to do something great for you, and I will, 'to

the half of my kingdom,' " she answered breathlessly, trying to be playful.

"This would be a great one for me. Won't you kiss me good-by, Bo, just once?"

"Oh, Mr. Pritchard," backing towards the door, "I don't think I can. I should n't know how. You know I have never kissed any man. My father died before I could remember, and I have never had any brothers."

That her rich red lips had never been kissed by any man did not make them less attractive to poor Larry, who stood outside the gates of paradise.

"Just as you please, dear," backing towards the other door and regarding her with hungry eyes; "but it would make me very happy."

"And I have promised to try to make you happy," cried Bo, turning deadly pale and advancing a step.

"And I have promised to try not to make you unhappy," said Larry, pained at the sight of her white face, and receding a step with his hand upon the door-knob. "Good-by, my dear."

"But, Mr. Pritchard," gasped Bo, drawing nearer bravely, like Madame Roland to her doom, with closed eyes and uplifted mouth, "I will give you a kiss."

"No," said Larry stoutly, rattling the doorknob with trembling hand, trying to go, but fascinated by the sight of the face coming towards him. Human self-denial has its limits. Larry's limbs refused to move. He felt that life had not been in vain to get a kiss from Bo. To have her mouth lifted to his and leave it untouched was beyond his human nature. He was overwhelmed by the immensity of the occasion and

frightened as a girl. With violently beating heart, he dropped a light kiss on her cold lips and hurried away. When the tumult of feeling had subsided, he was quite sure it had been the happiest day of his life. The comforter was Bo's first present to him, and carrying it off in a paper parcel, he squeezed it now and then to be certain it was there.

"She will make me a good little wife, and I shall make her as happy as I can, and not trouble her long," was the honest fellow's thought as he trudged home under an umbrella. He aspired to be a lover and a soldier. He did not look either part, but a truer heart never beat for mistress or for country.

After Larry had gone, Mrs. Disney came back and resumed a book she had been reading.

Bo contemplated her silently for some time.

"Mamma," she said presently, looking out of the window, speaking as lightly as she could, "are you happy, very happy?"

"Yes, dear, you would make any mother happy. Why do you ask?"

"Because I like to hear you say you are happy. I makes me — happier."

## XXVIII.

### A NEW SAINT IN THE CALENDAR.

THE next day, the weather cleared. A great amateur concert for the benefit of the hospitals, which had been in preparation for weeks, was given in the afternoon. Bo, with the rest of Richmond society, was present. She wore a Parisian walking suit, a fact as astonishing to herself as anything in or out of the Arabian nights.

Strange as it may seem now, girls were as fond of beautiful clothes then as in times of profound peace ; probably more so, for girls do not dress altogether for the admiration of their own sex, and during the war men were more to the front and more ready to admire than in ordinary times.

A young girl, a cousin of Bo's, engaged to be married to a Confederate general, had the good fortune to get through the lines from Baltimore with a Parisian trousseau, and hearing that Bo was going to be married, generously presented her with one of her costumes. It came in the nick of time, for, as Bo said, she was on her last rags. She agreed that it was incongruous to dress like a pauper at one time and as a fashion plate at another, but necessity knows no law. Bo was not happy, but she was a woman ; and if she were going to the scaffold, she would still enjoy the look, the touch,

the odor, of Parisian clothes. She wore hers for the first time to the concert. Had they been the gift of a fairy, they could not have better suited her delicate, spirited beauty. They were the perfection of material prettiness, and she added the grace that gave them human interest.

She looked in the glass and viewed herself from every point.

"You are French from the top of your stylish bonnet to the tip of your lacquered toe," she said gayly, laughing, showing all her small white teeth as she whirled from right to left and back again before the mirror. Then she became suddenly grave. The word "French" brought back all her trouble; she turned away with the old pain at her heart.

"Pooh! what do I care for finery?" she said, sending a hassock spinning across the floor with the point of her lacquered toe.

Walking up the main aisle of the concert-room, she concentrated the gaze of the audience. It would not have been in human nature not to look after her charming figure. A Parisian toilet has its value at the best of times. Think of its glory in a community blockaded from fabric and fashion during three years! Every eye eagerly followed the dainty lace-trimmed pelisse and the coquettish bonnet, with its aigrette of plumes, that looked the very oriflamme of youth and beauty. There was a momentary compression of hearts in the crowd. Men were breathless with admiration, women with envy. One observer felt the stir her toilet created as a breath from his native land. From nowhere else could such perfection of form and color

have emanated. Bo's beauty he felt to be part of his life. Nobody loved her as he did. Her sudden appearance in this unexpected guise acted powerfully on St. Maur's French temperament. He forgot his worldly wisdom, and was so agitated as scarcely to know what happened during the performance. The music was only an atmosphere in which his love rose and fell, throbbed with passionate life, or ached in long-drawn-out pain with its scherzos and adagios. No combination sways the human soul like love and music. Every lover knows what it is to be thrilled to rapture, or moved to tears, by some musical phrase that leaves a rational companion tranquil.

St. Maur had acceded to Bo's wishes, and kept away from her since the day she told him she could not marry him. The first ardor of that occasion abated, he felt she had been wise in not accepting him, and bore his banishment with what philosophy he could until he learned she was going to marry another man. That hurt, although he could not deny that, next to discarding himself, the wisest thing she could do was to marry Larry Pritchard.

It was comparatively easy to coolly figure all this out at his desk in the War Department, and easier still over his scanty meals in a boarding-house; but it was altogether different when Bo, bewitchingly beautiful in a Parisian costume, had the world looking on, and every man as free to admire her as he who loved her and was loved by her. That was hard. He waited for her, and when the crowd poured out of the concert-room, he joined her, although he knew that for both their sakes it was the most imprudent thing to do.

Her soft, dark eyes lit up with the old flash, her cheeks glowed, and he knew by the quickening of his own pulses just how her heart was beating. But they were in a crowd. More than one young man pressed forward to join her. He had the good luck to be first.

"Miss Disney, may I walk home with you?" he asked, with the conventional bow and smile.

"I am not going so far as home, but I shall be glad to have you go with me to Miss Patty's door," she answered, in the same way.

St. Maur's conventional smile vanished into very real gloom. Miss Patty's door was only just round the corner; moreover, it was Larry Pritchard's door, and he wanted, for a brief space at least, to forget the existence of such a person.

He was silent until they were beyond the press of the crowd.

"You want to remind me not to encroach on Mr. Pritchard's preserves?" he said coldly.

"No," she answered gently; "I'm going to ask if they have heard anything of Madelaine since she went away. Mamma and I are beginning to get anxious about her."

"Then I beg your pardon," with the swift and entire change of mood and countenance which to Bo was one of his captivating ways. Most men have to be humored out of their ugly tempers. St. Maur's mood tacked about with charming facility. It was not difficult to get pleased, with Bo looking so lovely in her French dress. Hers was the high-bred type whose beauty is made more effective by the advantages of style, that



subtle charm composed of grace, of manner, tint, costume, and a thousand indescribable things, which all men admire and Frenchmen adore.

Never had St. Maur found Bo so fascinating ; none the less, that her old exuberant light-heartedness was tinged with sadness in spite of her efforts to be gay. When they reached the Pritchards, door, St. Maur persuaded her to take a walk with him before she went in.

“ Only a short one, for the last time, and the weather so beautiful,” he urged.

The weather was at its finest. Richmond is always loveliest in May. After the long, wet spell inevitable in that month, she emerges fresh and beautiful, like Venus from her bath. The vivified air is vocal with bird notes and full of the entrancing odors of rain-washed leaves and blossoms. The turf of its gardens and parterres, putting forth myriads of young blades, seems recarpeted with velvet for the foot of spring. Trees, with a new vesture of tender green, rustle their boughs and spread a broader shade. Vines, with fresh tendrils, take a larger grasp and throw a wider mantle over wall and trellis. The thoughts of young men lightly turn to love, and those of young women meet them halfway.

The street was full of promenaders, young and old, taking an airing after the concert. Bo had the pleasure and distinction of a cordial greeting from Mrs. President in her brougham, and from the President on his beautiful white Arabian, which was one of the ornaments of Richmond during the war.

“ I suppose you know how well you look ? ” St. Maur could not help saying, seeing Bo’s face flush and her

eyes sparkle with the fumes of admiration she received on every side.

"Yes, I fancy I 'm looking my best. Fine feathers make fine birds. But I feel as if I were masquerading in all this finery. Homespun seems so much more natural in these days ;" flirting a dainty parasol with a little self-depreciatory smile.

"But you are mistaken. You never looked so much in character. You were made for a *grande dame*."

When they had got beyond the town, which was not far to go then, and had turned into a green lane, he said, "I have not had an opportunity to congratulate you on your engagement. May I do so now?"

"Oh, yes," with a tightening of her heart-strings; "if you think it a subject of congratulation."

"I do; as Mrs. Pritchard, you will be able to be a *grande dame* every day."

"As if I cared for that kind of thing!" tilting her parasol so as to hide her eyes, into which tears would come.

"And you will have as many meals a day as you like."

"And you will not have to divide yours. I have thought a great deal more about yours than my own," winking away her tears.

"*Chérie*, I know that."

"Then why do you say cruel things?"

"Because I wanted to hear you say so. Forgive my being a little spiteful. How can I help it?"

"By not thinking of me."

"Ah, it is not so easy for me not to think of forbidden things as it is for you."

"For me? I" —

"Won't you put your parasol on the other side where the sun is? I should like to see your face," pleaded St. Maur, seeing she did not finish her sentence.

"I don't want you to see my face."

"Why not? It is the only thing on earth I care to see."

"Because — it — is — the — face — of — a — coward," said Bo, swallowing a tear between each word.

They called up St. Maur's tears.

"You need n't mind that, *chérie*, because we are — two cowards."

"Two babies!" said Bo, with a hysterical little laugh.

They were silent for a moment, looking straight ahead, regaining their composure.

Bo was the first to speak.

"You ought not to have joined me. It makes everything harder."

"I know it, but I could n't help it. When you came into the concert-room looking so lovely and every man admiring you, I was jealous of them all. I hated them all. I thought I should die if I did not see you and speak with you once more as Bo Disney, the girl who once loved me. I did not join you to say cruel things or make things harder; I only wanted to tell you again how much I love" —

"Please" — interrupted Bo.

"What is it, darling?" seeing her miserable face.

"Don't call me 'darling.' Please don't say anything I ought not to hear as Mr. Pritchard's future wife.

When I promised to marry him I pledged my faith to be true and loyal. It is all I can do."

"But I made no pledges. I shall always love you."

"You must never tell me so," with tremulous lip.

"But" —

"If I were going to marry you, and another man were to" —

"I should kill him."

"I believe you would."

"Let Pritchard kill me. I wish he would," gloomily.

"That is not the question," sobbed Bo, working out for herself the hard problem of life; "but that it is wrong for you to speak, and for me to listen."

St. Maur looked at her. This tender, beautiful girl strong as steel for loyalty, — she was a creature to love and be loved, to whom life without love would be as day without the sun. He saw her face, pale, agonized, yet unflinching with the pain of sacrifice, and recognized, probably for the first time in his life, that there was something better than himself, something higher than human love. But he was a man and a Frenchman. He only dimly understood. He was half inclined to believe it was a matter of temperament. But he was profoundly moved. He took off his hat. It was a necessity of his nature to express himself in action as in words.

"Boadicea," he said; and there was never a sweeter combination of sound than her name on his tongue, or at least Bo thought so. It thrilled her through and through. Her brows met in a straight dark line above her brimming eyes, her lips quivered.

"Boadicea," pressing his hat against his bosom.  
"you are not a woman, you are a saint, — a white saint.  
I will not tell you I love you. I will adore you far off  
as we adore the saints."

"I'm not a saint," indignantly; "I'm only a girl, —  
a girl in a tight place; and if I were you" —

"Which God forbid," crushing his hat.

"And you were me" —

"I shall never be anything so good."

"I should n't do anything to make it tighter," breaking down.

"By all the saints, I won't," breaking down too.

## XXIX.

### THE LAST OF BO DISNEY.

ST. MAUR and Bo bade each other a final farewell at Miss Patty's door. Their emotion had passed beyond expression into silence. A lingering, tear-clouded glance, a wringing of the hand, and they parted. Bo's dainty pelisse covered as broken a little heart as ever throbbed. St. Maur was as wretched as a Frenchman permits himself to be. But their griefs were not the only ones. Bo found Miss Patty troubled about many things. Nothing had been heard from Madelaine, to begin with. Then Larry, who, notwithstanding the comforter, had taken cold the night before, was suffering from a sharp attack of rheumatism. Jack was feverish and had a sore throat. In spite of Miss Patty's effort to speak calmly of this last, it was easy to see that she was exceedingly perturbed lest the malady should develop into diphtheria, which was prevalent then. The doctor had come, and said he could not tell what it might prove until the symptoms were more advanced. The child's illness brought Miss Patty to his nursery again. In fact, she rarely left it except when Larry needed her attention. Sitting by Jack's little bed, her heart ached that she should ever have banished herself from him. The little fellow, ordinarily so full of eager, happy life, lay flushed and languid, with labored

breathing and dull, unnoticing eyes. She remembered how many times she had averted her glance from his outstretched arms and joyous, welcoming face, how many times disregarded his prattling promises to "be dood." It was no comfort to her now to know that she had punished herself more than the child. No mother ever prayed harder for the recovery of her darling than Miss Patty for Jack's; all the more, that she had once thought it her duty to alienate herself from him.

"Only get him well, doctor," she cried, in an outburst of anxiety and alarm, "and I sha'n't care if he is a Yankee!"

The word was out before she knew it. Fortunately, the doctor did not see below the surface; "Yankee," like "Bony" in Thackeray's time, being used to signify the worst of everything. A few days passed, and the doctor pronounced the disease a mild case of scarlet fever. Miss Patty's heart was greatly relieved. She believed that with Jack's constitution and her unwearied care, he would pull through. This satisfaction was counterbalanced by the doctor looking grave over Larry's cold, which was more serious than at first appeared. There was a whisper of pneumonia, and in a day or two this theory was confirmed. Larry was very ill, and his life despaired of.

Miss Patty was amusing Jack with a remnant of a toy Noah's ark, bow-wowling with the dogs and mooing with the cows, which called up a languid smile from the boy, when Larry, whom she had left asleep, sent for her. She found him sitting up in bed, looking better, with flushed cheeks and brighter eyes.

"Why, Larry, you must be feeling better."

"Yes, better and stronger. Has Bo been here to-day?"

"Yes, while you were asleep; and she left you some wafers she helped to make herself."

"God bless her! Bring me the wafers. I will eat one. It will do me good," he said, in a strong, animated voice.

Miss Patty felt his pulse. He was evidently under febrile excitement, and she made up her mind to send for the doctor.

The wafers were brought, delicate, snowy biscuit, of thinness almost transparent, the poetry of food. Larry took one and ate half of it. His face brightened as he held up the other half to the light, which could be seen through it.

"Translucent! is n't it? Nobody could beat that," enthusiastically.

"It is remarkably well-beaten," said Miss Patty, venturing a feeble little pun to his playfulness.

"She will make the best little wife in the Confederacy, eh, Patty?"

Miss Patty answered with a watery smile.

Larry put aside the uneaten half wafer. It was more than he could swallow. His sister moistened his lips with ice. He seemed refreshed, and laid back among his pillows. Then he said deliberately and with less excitement, —

"Patty, I want you to send for Bo and Mr. Rothwell; and I hope Rothwell will not disappoint us as he did Madelaine and poor Dallas" —

"Larry, dear," —



"Don't expostulate," fretfully. "I know what I'm about. It's past three o'clock, and very little time left."

It was really only about ten o'clock in the forenoon. Miss Patty was convinced that his mind was wandering, but hastened to carry out his instructions. To irritate him might make him worse, and to have Rothwell with him could do no harm at any time. She also sent on her own account for the doctor.

Bo, who lived nearest, was the first to come. She was surprised at the summons and a little alarmed. Her first thought was of Jack, who, when she was there earlier in the day, was much the more ill of Miss Patty's two patients. But the message, which was hurried and imperative, came from Mr. Pritchard himself. Perhaps it was to arrange some new kindness for her mother. He was so grateful for her little attentions, she was almost afraid to offer them. It might be he wanted to thank her for the wafers. She decided that that was the meaning of the hasty summons. Ill people will be fanciful and impatient. She was as far from imagining what he wanted as possible.

Tying on a rough straw hat, which did duty for early marketing, Bo made no other preparation for her unexpected visit.

"Good-by, mamma. I'm off to the Pritchards' again. They want me for something or other," she said, waiting a kiss as she was leaving the room.

"They are always wanting you. Come back soon. Don't stay forever," cried Mrs. Disney, half jestingly, half impatiently.

"Oh, I'll come back! You have n't seen the last of Bo Disney!"

She arrived at the Pritchards', heated and breathless, her face shining like a red rose under its broad straw thatch.

Afra, who was evidently on the lookout, met her at the front door.

"Miss Patty say as how to walk right upstairs to Mars Larry's room," she said, very solemn and important.

The woman's appearance impressed Bo at once. Something must be the matter, Afra looked so much blacker than usual. The ordinary hilarious gleam of her teeth and the whites of her eyes seemed to have retired into the background. Her appearance and manner had gone into mourning.

"Why, Afra, what's the matter? Is Mr. Pritchard worse to-day?"

"Miss Patty thinks as how Mars Larry's a little quare to-day, an' she sot it down to de fever."

Bo went upstairs with trepidation. She did not know what to expect. She had not been asked to see Mr. Pritchard since his indisposition, which was supposed to be trifling.

Afra's account indicated something serious. She found Larry sitting up in bed, not perceptibly altered in appearance since they last met. On a table near him were the wafers. The red comforter was thrown across his feet. As soon as she entered the room, he asked his sister, who stood by with red eyelids and trembling lips, to leave them for a little while.

This unexpected request disconcerted Bo. She be-

gan to understand what Afra meant by his being a little queer. Besides his labored breathing, his manner, ordinarily slow and halting, was hurried and eager with suppressed excitement. His eyes brightened at her approach.

"Little Bo!" he cried, in a tone full of relief. "I knew you would come!"

"Could any one doubt it?" she asked, putting aside her hat to show that she intended to be useful. "What can I do for you, Mr. Pritchard?"

"Bo," he said entreatingly, as if to preclude all possibility of denial, "it is n't *what* you will do for me; that you have already promised. It is *when* you will do it."

Bo changed color. She understood what he wanted. A man puts into one request only the meaning that pleaded in Larry's voice and eyes. She answered with a look of consternation.

He seemed glad not to be interrupted, and went on hurriedly, as if there was not a moment to be lost. He even took up his watch, that lay on the bed by his side.

"You promised to marry me next month, and I made that time suit me because it suited you; but, Bo," holding out the watch to her with sad earnestness; "Time's hands have been put forward a month, — put forward almost to the last stroke for me."

"O Mr. Pritchard, I will do what you want this month," cried Bo, the tears welling up at sight of a man calmly measuring time on the shores of eternity.

"This month?" his breathing becoming every moment more difficult. "Forgive me, dear, but I mean *this day*."

"This day?" looking terrified. "But — but you have no license; my mother is not here" —

"I have the license. I got it the day you consented to marry me. These are troublesome times, and remembering poor Dallas's experience I determined to have everything ready, as far as I could. You see I was right," lying back exhausted. "I forgot to send for your mother, but she will forgive us."

Bo had not much time to consider. The doctor and Rothwell arrived almost together. The doctor agreed with Larry that what was to be done should be done quickly. Larry's spurious strength, born of excitement and kept up by force of will, could not last long.

Larry, seeing Bo's consternation, tried to smile as he feebly held out his hand to her. "You see, dear, May after all is a lucky month for me. You will be my wife in May."

"O Mr. Pritchard!" sobbed Bo again.

"And I hope it will not be unlucky for you," he said wistfully, pressing her little hand in his great bony fingers.

He did not speak again until the time came for him to repeat the promises made "until death us do part." As he said this, he turned his face to her with a tender smile.

Bo felt as if her heart would break, the words, which for most men mean so much, for him meant so little, — a moment, a breath of time.

Within the room reigned a solemn stillness, which awed to silence even Jack in his adjoining nursery, of which the door stood open. Miss Patty, at the foot of her brother's bed, wept silently. The doctor, who as-

sisted at so many sad scenes of life's drama, looked on as a witness to the solemn contract. Without, cheerful street noises seemed so near and yet so far.

The rumble of wheels, cries of ripe strawberries, and the laughter of children coming through open windows sounded in the darkened chamber like echoes from another world.

Finally came the words, "I pronounce you man and wife."

When all was over, Larry, with the old-fashioned manners of his youth, raised Bo's hand reverently to his lips and faintly called her "Mrs. Pritchard."

And Bo remembered with a great rush of feeling that she had told her mother she had not seen the last of Bo Disney.

### XXX.

#### SICK AND IN PRISON.

THE afternoon sun shone brightly through the grated windows of a long room, furnished with a double row of iron cots, in each of which lay a wounded soldier, whose white face was set to conquer agony. These were the dangerously wounded in a Washington prison hospital. Not a groan, not a sigh, escaped their pale lips, but their drawn features and the occasional uplifting of glazed eyes bespoke the extreme of human suffering. One man had had his arm shot away, another his leg amputated, a third, with a hole through his lungs, breathed heavily, as if each respiration was a separate pang. The dews of death were gathering on the brows of more than one. In a small room opening out of this common ward lay Hugh Dallas, a prisoner, wounded and alone. His pallid face, with eyes closed against the glare blazing through a curtainless window, knit brows, and sternly set jaw, was a picture of uncomplaining anguish. The loss of a leg, pain, thirst, he bore with a soldier's fortitude. The thought that he should never again see home, kindred, and, above all, the woman he loved, forced tears from his eyes. Great drops, wrung from his soul, stole from beneath his lashes and trickled over his white cheeks, and he had not strength to wipe them away.

The head of his bed was turned towards a window, whose iron gratings cast their shadow on a vivid ground of sunshine on the wall opposite his feet. Whenever he opened his aching eyes, they rested on this dazzling picture of prison bars. Flies buzzed about his ears and stung his face and hands. His tongue was parched. The glare, noise, and dust from the street, and the stifling odors of an overcrowded hospital, added their small miseries to his sufferings. The weary hours wore on, broken only at long intervals by a flying visit from a careless hospital attendant, and with no hope of relief except by death. His memory, so far as he was capable of mental effort, dwelt in the past. On one occasion, he did not know what day or hour, he was suddenly and vividly reminded of young Fairfax. Something intangible brought up the scene in the railway-car. He was too weak to grasp the clue, or to associate ideas, or even to open his eyes. He only remembered. With a faint, indefinable sense of pleasure, he drew a long breath, and seemed to see again the smile of relief flicker round Fairfax's pale lips. The intangible something became more and more apparent. A fresh, sweet odor swept over him like a breath from Paradise. A half smile played about his own lips as he recognized the smell of eau de cologne, which, he had said, would remind him of Madelaine and Fairfax to his dying day.

The reviving odor evoked a memory that he felt almost as a presence. He was almost afraid to breathe, lest it should vanish. While his spirit was refreshed by fancies, which are said to take possession of the soul on the eve of its departure, the glare in the room

was tempered to a soft twilight, a breeze rippled over his face and through his hair, a cool, soft hand was laid upon his forehead. Then he ventured cautiously to open his eyes, and they met, not the blue-coated orderly who sometimes asked if he wanted anything, but Mrs. Key's rebel-colored eyes, looking down on him with the tender sympathy which brings the human face nearest the divine.

Had Dallas waked up in the next world to happiness, his countenance could not have expressed more delight than when he feebly uttered, —

“Madelaine!”

The flutter of her great feather fan was more refreshing than the rustle of angels' wings.



## XXXI.

### POOR TIMBERLAKE.

Mrs. KEY found that Dorset had been right in supposing he could be of use to her in Washington. He had had no difficulty in explaining his long absence from the army. Left for dead with so many of his comrades within the enemy's lines, his reappearance in the flesh was the occasion of great wonderment and rejoicing among his acquaintances, with whom he was a favorite, and at headquarters, where he was valued as an officer. His present condition amply testified to an illness which had rendered him unfit for service. He was treated with the consideration due one who has been lost and found, dead and made alive again. He succeeded in obtaining permission for Mrs. Key to attend the rebel Major Dallas who was supposed to be dying. Rothwell's name secured for her a refuge in a girl's school under the care of his sisters, who received her as one of themselves. The difficulties of her enterprise at this point ended in a way surprising to herself.

Dallas did not ask how she came to be with him. He had thought of her and longed to see her so persistently that her presence seemed only the natural sequence of things. He was too weak to bridge over, even in imagination, the difficulties which intervened between her determination to come and its accomplish-

ment. He could only murmur, "How good of you," and close his eyes and let himself be ministered to.

The surgeon in charge had impressed upon Mrs. Key that he was to be kept quiet and without excitement. At long intervals, he talked a little. He asked about his friends at home, and Madelaine said she had a letter for him when he was well enough to read it.

He smiled and whispered softly, "When?"

"I am very happy, Madelaine," he said after a while, seeing the shadow that had fallen on her face, and trying to comfort her for the pain she suffered for him.

"O Hugh, and your leg!" burst from her, his words touching the core of her thoughts.

"My leg has gone, dear, but" — his face lighting up with great joy.

"But" — she interrupted breathlessly.

"But *you* have *come*," he said, with a contented smile, while she buried her face in the bedclothes.

She knew that nothing would unman him so much as her tears. She rose from that moment of weakness with renewed strength. She did not give way again, but was so cheerful and helpful that the surgeon, on his next round, congratulated her on the improvement in her patient.

"If he goes on like this," he said, "Major Dallas will be about again in time for his exchange;" and he went away greatly impressed by the prisoner's nice-looking friend.

On one occasion, Hugh, opening his eyes after a long sleep, asked quietly, and as if resuming a conversation, —

"How was Jack when you came away?"

Madelaine, to whom the question was sudden and unexpected, reminding her of Jack's father, reddened as she answered, "As well and saucy as ever."

Hugh, who noted her countenance as a mariner studies the heavens, saw the change and wondered why she should blush at mention of Jack.

"Poor Timberlake," he continued, apparently without connection, "was killed at Chancellorsville."

Mrs. Key looked at him keenly. Was he wandering?

Hugh understood her glance. "Oh, I'm all right," he explained, nodding cheerfully. "Now that Timberlake has gone, there can be no harm in telling you that he left Jack at your aunt's door."

Madelaine leaned forward, deeply interested.

"A pretty woman who lodged in the house with him persuaded him to do it. I did all I could to prevent it. But Timberlake was a great woman's man and the tenderest-hearted creature. Poor fellow! he said he would not live to see the sequel."

This was the longest speech he had made since he was wounded. It cost him an effort, but he wanted to make the explanation. It had always galled him that he knew more of Jack than he could divulge. It seemed unfair to Miss Pritchard and Madelaine. Now that he had made a clean breast of the little he knew, he felt relieved as a man who has performed a long-delayed duty.

He lay back on his bed resting after the unusual exertion. He looked so pale and exhausted that Madelaine decided that he must not talk until he was stronger.

Presently, when he essayed to speak again, she placed a warning finger on her lips.

"I was only going to say that I suppose we shall never know Jack's mystery. But I will not speak again until you give me leave, dear mistress," he said like a docile child, closing his eyes that her face might not tempt him to conversation. What he said probably meant little to himself, but it touched Madelaine deeply. She could see that he felt it a duty to tell her what he knew about Jack. It could be no less hers to tell him what further discoveries had been made. He was under the impression that she knew as little as himself. It would be disingenuous, to say the least, to leave him under that impression. Having been a witness to the first scene in the little drama, it was only natural that he should be interested in the denouement. In fact, he had always shown especial fondness for Jack, greatly, no doubt, because of her love for him. He had once declared that when he and Madelaine were married he would adopt Jack, if Miss Patty would consent. Remembering him as he said this, a dashing soldier, resplendent in a new uniform and lusty with youth and health, the tears rushed to Madelaine's eyes as she looked now on Hngh's maimed figure and bloodless, pain-worn face.

Some day when he was stronger and better able to stand a surprise, she would tell him that Jack's father had been found, and that he was a — well, she would see if he were well enough to stand that. Meanwhile Dallas continued to improve. He was well tended, comfortable, and happy having Madelaine near him. In a day or two he found he could indulge in a little

talk and not feel the worse for it. Cheerful conversation being part of the treatment which was making him stronger and better able, mentally and physically, to bear his grievous misfortune.

The surgeon sometimes tarried a few minutes to join in the talk. He felt that what was good for the patient was good for the physician, in whose daily round there were few things so pleasant as Mrs. Key's voice, whose lingering sweetness dwelt in his ear like a caress long after he had left Major Dallas's bedside. He had taken up the impression that Mrs. Key was Dallas's sister, who by some happy chance had been allowed to tend his patient, whose sister and misfortunes made him almost forget that the major was a rebel.

It was not long before Jack, with other home subjects, came up again between Madelaine and Dallas. The latter had been speaking of the idiotic way he lost his head the day he saw Mrs. Manning at Miss Pritchard's.

"I'm pretty sure she is the woman who persuaded poor Timberlake — Tim, we used to call him — to leave Jack at your aunt's door."

"You had seen her before?" said Madelaine, who had found some sewing to do, and was making a green curtain for Dallas's window.

It was an infinite satisfaction to Hugh to have her there, tethered with a needle and thread. A woman sewing is a more restful picture than one with idle hands. It seems a guarantee that she will abide awhile. The curve of Madelaine's neck, the deep furrow in the parting of her luxuriant hair, her white,

downcast lids and the movement of her slim fingers were all delightful to contemplate.

"You were for a few minutes, but I could not remember where. That quick-witted little friend of yours, Miss Dancy, saw how puzzled I was, and forever afterward suspected me of knowing more than I cared to tell."

"Bo's wits wear seven-league boots; they arrive at a conclusion before other people's set out."

"I believe she gave me credit for being one of Jack's relatives?" with a shy, sidelong glance.

"Yes," said Madelaine gravely, with an over-head-and-ears blush that reddened even the line of parting in her hair, while her glance was focused on the eye of the needle she was intent on threading; "she assigned you the part of sister."

"Sister?" echoed Hugh, with a laugh such as he had not had since Chancellorsville. "*Sister?*"

Then Madelaine told him Bo's story of Moses in the bushes.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Hugh, "I believe she nearly made a ten strike."

"I suppose we shall never know Jack's mystery," he said after a pause, in which the pathetic look of patience resettled on his face.

"Hugh," said Madelaine, with an attempt at lightness, but failing to keep a certain meaning out of her voice or the rising color out of her face.

He looked at her, his great, hollow eyes lit up with expectancy. "You have found out all about Jack?"

"I have found out who his father is," in low, unsteady tones, astonished at his discernment.

"Then I know who it is," with eager interest.

"How can you know?" turning pale.

"I guessed it long ago, and then put it aside as improbable."

"O Hugh!"

"Is it not Hardwick the Georgian?"

"Yes," she murmured, more and more amazed and bewildered.

"You see, dear, when I was in camp the long dreary winter before the battle, I had only your letters to live on. I read them so often that I saw in them more than you consciously put in them. You wrote constantly of Hardwick and Jack, and somehow, I can't tell how, they began to be associated in my mind, until, at last, one day it suddenly flashed over me that Hardwick might be Jack's father. It was the merest suggestion at first, but it grew until it became almost a conviction. And do you know, Madelaine" — wistfully.

"What, dear?"

"I was beginning to get jealous of Hardwick."

"O Hugh!"

"Those far Southern fellows are often very fascinating, and I was glad when you wrote me he had gone."

"And did you doubt me?" trying to be playful as she clasped his gaunt, outstretched hand.

"God forbid! I knew you would be true. But I did envy Hardwick having you so near him."

"He and I were farther apart than you can imagine, dear Hugh," she said earnestly; and Dallas looked relieved.

"Anyhow, I have you now," pressing her hand.

"He laughs best who laughs last," trying with a smile to dispel the trouble in her eyes.

Madelaine did not dare to say more, lest the whole truth should escape her. Remembering her own horror at learning that Hardwick was not Hardwick and a Southerner, but an enemy, she knew it would not be a good sleeping potion for Hugh, who needed all the repose he could get.

The day was coming to an end. The hour had arrived for her to return to the Rothwells'. Kneeling by Hugh's bedside, she kissed his hand and bade him good-night.

"Good-night. Rest well. I will come again with the morning."

Then she moved noiselessly about the room, putting it in order and arranging things for his comfort. She paused at the door to wave him another good-by.

He looked so much more comfortable, as well as better and stronger, than when she arrived, that she thanked God she had come.

"Good - night, good - night," she repeated, wafting from her lips a farewell which he returned with his patient smile. On the way out, she met the night attendant coming in.

"Remember," she said, "if you take good care of Major Dallas, I will reward you."

"All roight," said the man, an Irishman, who, like most of his compatriots, had a keen eye and soft tongue for the sex. "It 's somethin' av a rewarrd to have the likes av yez comin' an' goan, anyhow."



## XXXII.

### WHO LOSES HIS LIFE FINDS IT.

MADELAINE had not been gone long when Hugh, who had been lying with closed eyes so that their last impression should be of her, opened them at the sound of footsteps in his room. He expected to see the old Irishman who had charge of the ward at night. Instead of his slouching figure and shambling gait, he was surprised to see a young man, who struck him as being as good-looking a fellow as he had ever encountered, tall, with the straight back, well-braced shoulders, and easy movements of a trained soldier. In addition, he had a handsome face, fresh and frank as a boy's. His appearance was none the less interesting for a certain look of delicacy which spoke of recently recovered health after long illness. His features were a little sharpened, and his fine-grained skin was unsunned and fair as a girl's. The direct glance of his eyes and his mouth were manly enough.

He nodded pleasantly on meeting Hugh's surprised glance, and striking a match, asked if Major Dallas objected to pipe smoke. Hugh drew in a long breath of satisfaction. The newcomer had struck the right chord, the only one, probably, to which Hugh's sensibilities would have responded unconditionally.

"Object? Why, my friend, I believe it is the one thing I should like."

"So? Perhaps you would like to smoke yourself?"

"If I may?" wistfully.

"If you may? Who's to hinder? I'm boss here to-night," stuffing the bowl of a rakish-looking, short-stemmed pipe and giving it to the invalid. Then he proceeded to arrange Hugh's pillows, and dexterously raised him to a position to enjoy a smoke.

"There!" exclaimed the stranger, when the pipe began to draw and Hugh's head to be encircled with clouds, "that's a thing a woman nurse never thinks of, eh?"

A calm look of content overspread Hugh's face with the first whiff, warm and comforting as a mother's kiss, and more fragrant to the sick man than the scent of new-mown hay.

"That's good," he grunted between his set teeth, leisurely scrutinizing the newcomer from behind the lashes of eyes half-closed in the delicious languor of a smoke after a long fast.

He found the stranger altogether above the grade of hospital nurse and with none of the professional air of a surgeon. Although he wore no uniform, he could only be a soldier. No man not bred to arms could have the movements and bearing of this benefactor, who had given him a pipe and with it the dreamland of soothing memories, a phantasmagoria of past pleasures. Home and its loves, campaigns and comrades, combats and victories, were all blended in the clouds of smoke that issued from Hugh's lips.

The stranger had filled a pipe for himself, and there was a long silence between them, in which Hugh aban-

doned himself to the enjoyment of his new-found luxury.

"You seem to know all about taking care of a fellow that's — that's — down," he ventured at length, not liking to ask the newcomer the direct question as to how he came by his skill.

The stranger, who was looking round on the rough accommodations of the room with evident disgust, replied, —

"You see, I have lately been down myself, and I've learned a thing or two. It was a ducky who first suggested a pipe, and if he had been graduated in medicine, he could n't have advised a better thing."

Hugh grunted a grateful assent. Luckily, there is no need of conventionality in a sick-room. Nothing more passed between them. Another long silence ensued, during which Hugh laid aside his pipe and dozed off to sleep, the first beneficent effect of his new friend's prescription. When his deep, regular breathing betrayed that he had sunk into profound slumber, Dorset went quietly to his bedside and looked at him long and earnestly. Under the coarse bed-clothing the outline of the sleeper's mutilated figure was plainly discernible. His face, though calm, was bloodless and worn with suffering. His lips were set with a pathetic expression of great patience. His closed eyes were deep-sunken and their sockets dark with shadows.

The stranger felt a compression of heart, and his countenance quivered, as he looked on the broken soldier. This wreck of a noble humanity was the man of all others he had envied, the man whom he had de-

sired with an overwhelming desire to see, as the most favored of men.

Enemy and rival though Dallas was, it was impossible for the man by his side to feel for him anything harsher than supreme sympathy. Pity would have been a degradation to the man who, having done and suffered all, waited patiently for the next call of duty, which to the looker-on seemed inevitably to die. There even came to the watcher the feeling that he who loses his life for duty finds it. As John Dorset looked down on Hugh Dallas's pure, calm face, the confession was wrung from his soul, "In the battle of life, thou hast conquered."

### XXXIII.

#### A LOVE LETTER.

MY DEAR MRS. KEY, — I hope you will not be grieved to hear from me once more. Fate has brought us together so often, and for me so kindly, that I cannot go back to the army without asking if, on this last day, there is not something I can do for you or your patient. And since you have decided that we may not meet again, I feel that I must bid you a last farewell. I owe you so much more than life that I must tell you that henceforth my chief thought in life and my last in death will be yours. I pray that all happiness may come to you.

It has been great happiness to me to know you. I dare not think what it would have been had I been blessed with your friendship in a time of peace. But you will even now let me think of you as a friend, and I dare ask for your continued interest in Jack. Let me know if there is anything I can do for you or for Major Dallas, whom I honor as a brave man and your friend.

Believe me now, as ever, yours to command,

JOHN DORSET.

This letter was delivered to Mrs. Key early the following morning, as she was leaving the Rothwells' to

return to Hugh. She had just stolen quietly out of the house at great pains not to disturb the sleeping family, and, hesitating to go back for the same reason, she read the letter on the doorstep. Written with the impetuosity of strong feeling and a desire to restrain love to the pace of friendship, its big, shaky letters moved Madelaine as Dorset's voice, which always trembled when he spoke to her.

The messenger wanted to know if there was an answer. Having no means to send a written reply, she told him to thank the gentleman who sent it, and say there was no other answer. Then she thrust the letter in her pocket and hurried to the hospital, rejoicing for once that it was far away. She was glad of a long walk in which to steady her nerves.

Although day was only beginning to break, the town was already astir, and as usual after a great battle, in a state of ferment. Chancellorsville was on every tongue. The military situation was the only thing thought of. The streets were full of soldiers. The populace was in an anxious, angry mood. Madelaine, going swiftly and silently through the great, ill-paved thoroughfares, heard curses loud and deep against rebels, and sardonic rejoicings over the death of Stonewall Jackson. With wildly-beating heart, she felt that she was indeed in the enemy's country.

When she reached Dallas's room, she found him asleep. Ordinarily, he was wide awake, patiently waiting for her to come and bathe his face, give him his breakfast, and do the thousand and one things that refresh an invalid after a night of wakefulness and suffering. Laying aside her bonnet and gloves, she

glanced round the room, and discovered indications that some one else had been performing these offices for her patient. Hugh's face was placid and restful, as she had not seen it since she came. His hair and beard had been carefully trimmed. His coarse bedclothing had been exchanged for cool linen sheets, and his head reclined on fresh, white pillows. A tempting pitcher, tinkling with ice and beaded with coolness, replaced the rusty tin bucket of tepid water. Finally, a saucer of ripe, red strawberries, the first of the season, stood on a table near his bed, a delightful bit of color and fragrance in the gloom of the jail-like apartment.

Mrs. Key wondered silently what good fairy had been at work during her absence. It was not long before she was made aware.

After a while, Hugh waked up, and met her wondering glance with a look which showed that he appreciated her mystification.

"You are wondering to see me looking like a gentleman once more," passing his wan hand over his hair and beard. "You don't know how nice it feels."

"But I know how nice it *looks*. You are positively handsome this morning, Hugh. Who has been taking my place? It must have been a man. Nobody but a man could get hair and beard into such order."

"It *was* a man," heartily, enjoying her puzzled face.

"Surely not old Pat."

"No, it was a barber."

"And did he make your bed and bring the strawberries?"

"No, but the Samaritan who sent the barber had all these things done for me."

"Then the Samaritan must have friends at court. Such sheets and such pillows!"

"I should n't be surprised. He looked like a fellow with friends at court."

"Here's a pipe! Tobacco, too! O Hugh, did you enjoy them?"

"Enjoy them?" his face brightening with the old-time flash. "You may bet your bottom dollar on that, Madelaine!"

Mrs. Key laughed with delight at his cheerfulness.

"I won't bet, Hugh, for my bottom dollar is also my top dollar."

Then they both laughed, and after a while Hugh proceeded to tell her slowly and at intervals, as he was able, of the man who had taken old Pat's place the night before, and sent a servant to look after him as soon as he was awake.

"A capital fellow with such a good face and confoundedly handsome eyes! Well, I suppose if I were a woman, I should have to surrender to eyes like his."

"Eyes?" repeated Madelaine, vaguely troubled.

"Yes. Can you imagine my noticing a man's eyes? I suppose I should never have remarked them, had I been on my legs — leg, rather. Being laid up here makes a fellow as dependent as a woman. I believe I'm beginning to look at things from a woman's point of view."

"You have n't an ounce of woman in you," indignantly. "except your tender heart. What was the color of your new friend's eyes?"

Hugh laughed.

"I'm not such a woman, after all. I never thought



about the color. Besides, it was night and too dark to see the color. I could only see them shine in the lamplight and feel their friendliness. They were the kind of eyes that tell the secrets of a man's heart."

Madelaine glowed as she recognized the kind of eyes.

"In the field," continued Hugh, "I dare say he would much rather have killed me than not; but last night, he looked as if he would willingly cut off his right leg to replace mine."

"God bless him for his goodness to you," said Madelaine, winking away the tears as she gave Hugh the strawberries.

There was silence while he partook of the fruit with a show of enjoyment he scarcely felt. Presently, he said shyly, "Madelaine."

She looked up.

"Madelaine, do *my* eyes show how much I love you?"

"Yes, Hugh," burst from her aching heart, "and they are so kind and true, I feel as if no harm could come to me while their light shines on me."

"I'm glad of that, dearest. Sometimes I cannot speak, my voice fails me when I would tell you how much I love you. But my eyes follow you always with a message of love. It is so in this world, and will be so when" —

He did not finish this sentence, so full of solemn and tender significance as to wring Madelaine's heart.

The surgeon entered the room rather abruptly. It was an unusual hour for his appearance, and, in spite of professional calm, his manner betrayed haste.

"Mrs. Key," he said hurriedly, "that young Confederate fellow you read to sometimes would like to see you. Can you go to him? It might be a comfort."

Madelaine knew from the surgeon's face that the lad was dying, that there was no time to lose. She glanced towards Hugh. She dreaded the effect of such intelligence on his spirits. His countenance expressed only supreme sympathy.

"Go, dear," he said earnestly. "I remember how you comforted Fairfax."

"I leave you the letter I promised you when you should be strong enough to read. It will interest you while I'm away. I'll come back as soon as I can," she said tenderly, pressing the letter into his hand as she met his loving glance.

The surgeon placed his hand on the door.

"I don't like to hurry you, but" —

"I know, I know," interrupted Madelaine, following him into the corridor, where he told her the lad was sinking fast.

In her haste, she had given Hugh the wrong letter. Instead of one from home, which she had brought concealed about her person from the other side and placed that morning in her pocket for Hugh, thinking he was at last equal to the exertion of reading, she had by mistake given him Dorset's letter.

Dallas did not open it at once. Believing it was from home, he raised it to his lips. It was fragrant with the odor of violets which clung to Madelaine's belongings, and he kissed it again. He looked at it lovingly, but he did not read it for some time. He was

willing to linger over the pleasure to lengthen out its interest during Madelaine's absence. Besides, in spite of Madelaine's hope, he had still an invalid's indisposition for exertion of even so trifling a character as reading a letter. He let it lie before him and studied its outside. He was not surprised to find it addressed to Mrs. Key. A letter to a Confederate soldier would have been a dangerous paper with which to run the blockade. His thoughts were following Madelaine, who, on more than one occasion, had been permitted by the surgeon to visit some of his Confederate patients. The boy to whom she had just been called had been severely wounded, with small chance of recovery. He had received her ministrations with the touching gratitude of a child. Her presence had been his only comfort in the long, weary days of dying. When his last hour came, with a pleading glance he feebly uttered her name.

It was while she held the dying lad's hand, striving to smooth his passage from life, that Hugh Dallas opened and read Dorset's letter.

## XXXIV.

### THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"JOHN DORSET," repeated Hugh thoughtfully, glancing at the signature before reading the letter. "And who can John Dorset be?" passing his hand across his forehead, with an effort to remember if he had heard the name before.

The letter was even more of a task than he had anticipated. He laid it down, and, leaning his head back on the pillow, tried to recall whether Madelaine had said it was from his sister. He could not remember that she had, although he was sure he had received that impression.

At length, smiling at his own dilatoriness, he proceeded languidly to read the letter, as the best way of discovering what it meant. He became at once interested, and read it with slow and close attention. He was painfully exercised over its contents. His first impression was that Madelaine's loyalty and desire to have no secrets from him had induced her to show him a letter which the writer, with all his efforts to the contrary, had failed to make anything but a love letter.

Reading it again, the significance of certain facts, which at first seemed inexplicable, became apparent. The writer was evidently a Federal soldier who had

received great kindness from her, and, of course, learned to love her. Now where could she have met and been kind to him? She had been in the Federal capital only a short time, and all her waking hours had been passed at Hugh's bedside. Going over the letter again, Dallas noticed more particularly the allusion to Jack. The blood mounted to his face as it convinced him that the writer was Jack's father. Yet how could he reconcile that with Madelaine's statement, that Jack's father was Hardwick? With the keen-witted acuteness of a lover, he remembered Madelaine's blush when he spoke of Jack's mystery. That blush had been for Jack's father. A chill crept over him, and his heart beat heavily as he asked himself if it were possible that Dorset and Hardwick were the same person, if the writer of the letter was the handsome young soldier Madelaine had nursed through a long illness, and of whose condition she had written so often and so feelingly? If this were so, how could the man help loving her?

Dorset's notice of Hugh himself was a still greater surprise. What could the Yankee have to do with him? It came to Dallas gradually that the man who had been with him the night before was Dorset.

The merest suggestion at first, the idea grew until he was finally persuaded that Madelaine's lover had come to see him. With a burst of indignation, he thought of how the fellow, strong in renewed health, good-looking, untouched by the casualties of war, free on the side of the heavy battalions, had come to look on him, a prisoner, maimed, stricken unto death. Hugh groaned aloud. No wrench of bone and sinew, no

tearing and hacking of the palpitating flesh, had been equal to this.

He realized now that the letter had been given him by mistake. It had never been intended that he should see it. It bore no date, but it was evidently freshly written, and breathed of to-day, the living, throbbing present. The painless feeling with which he had envied Hardwick Madelaine's companionship grew suddenly into a sentiment agonizing and strong as death. He thought of the days and weeks in which Dorset and Madelaine had been thrown together in the kindly intimacy of patient and nurse, of the tender bond between them in Jack, the child of one and loved of both. He remembered the man's great physical beauty and how Madelaine loved beauty. He thought of his own relations with Madelaine, avowedly those of friendship on her part, friendship so loyal and tender that he had made himself satisfied with it, although he knew it lacked the divine spark which would have made it love. That which he had been blind enough to believe was buried in the past. He knew better now. She had never blushed at mention of his name.

"My love! my only love!" was the cry of his soul, which could not readily unloose its one dream of happiness. He never knew how long he was alone with this conflict of feeling, but it did the work of years. The great battle of his life was fought then and there. He, who had been so tenderly guarded against exertion and excitement, struggled alone with jealousy, disappointed hopes, physical pain and weakness, the powers of darkness and death.

The letter was a great shock, which seemed to loosen

his hold on life. All the beneficent influences of Madelaine's presence and care were undone in a moment. The faint flush she had rejoiced to see faded from his cheek, his eyes lost their returning lustre. He looked old and gray and haggard. But he had conquered, — conquered all except his great love. That was immortal.

At last, through great physical weakness, he ceased to struggle. Gentler thoughts came to him. He even blamed himself for having accepted Madelaine's friendship. He ought to have known that a richly endowed nature like hers could not have lost the power to love. She was no blighted creature, upon whom the curse had fallen never to blossom with life's sweet affections again. And Dorset, how could he blame him for loving her? How could he even blame him for coming to see the man whom Madelaine was going to marry? In Dorset's place, he would have felt the same irresistible desire to see Madelaine's future husband. He would have compassed sea and land to get a glimpse of the man who had won her affection, to judge, if possible, with his own eyes, if he were worthy of her. And Dorset had looked worthy. True, he was one of the enemy, but the word "enemy" had no meaning for Hugh now. The world and its strifes seemed so far away.

"My love! my only love!" was still the dumb cry of his heart.

Exhausted by the struggle, he was lying white, motionless, and with closed eyes when an hospital attendant, passing through the room, was so shocked by the change in his appearance that he believed for a

moment Major Dallas was dead. Finding that he still breathed, the man asked if he could do anything for him. Hugh opened his eyes and looked at him steadily, as if trying to remember. To the man, he seemed to have come back from a far-off world of spirits. With a mighty effort, Hugh gathered up his strength and recalled what he wanted. In a sinking voice, he asked the man to bring him his coat.

When the bloodstained gray coat was brought, Hugh drew from an inner breast-pocket a cluster of withered flowers, and motioned to the man to go. When the attendant had reluctantly departed, for he believed Major Dallas to be dying, Hugh placed in his bosom the sere and withered leaves, all that remained of the blossoms Madelaine had given him the night they were to have been married. As he pressed them to his side, a faint smile hovered round his lips, and a slight movement passed through his frame. Once more, and for the last time, his faithful heart and broken body thrilled to the memory of that night.



## XXXV.

"The broken box — a human heart,  
The precious oil — its chrism of pain."

A MAN is standing alone in a great cathedral, of which the vaulted roof and dim aisles are being slowly lighted by the rising sun, whose rays steal softly and mysteriously through a rose window over the high altar.

The first pale beams of day stream through the yellow panes of the window's lowest edge, touching, as with celestial fire, the shadowy aisles with their long vistas of slender columns, delicate arches, and tessellated floors. Slowly ascending the eastern sky, the sun gradually reaches the splendid crimsons and violets of the window's centre, distilling gorgeous color through nave, transept, and choir, flecking the altar steps with blood-red stains, and pouring royal purple like wine on the marble pavement. It throws a halo round the pale, pain-stricken countenance of the man who stands facing the sanctuary. He is alone with a great sorrow. Like the martyrs of old, he feels the anguish, but is unconscious of the halo. His appearance proclaims him to be a soldier who has lost a leg in battle. He has unbuckled his sword and laid it on the altar steps. He will never use it again, and he offers it as a sacrifice. In his hands, he holds a bunch of faded flowers, evidently a love-token. This too, he wills to offer, but

it is a harder task. The struggle is visible on his face as he raises it to his quivering lips. His brow is beaded with moisture, and his hand trembles as he presses it to his mouth in a long, mute caress. Slowly and painfully he kneels and lays it beside the sword, while all his wounds seem to bleed afresh with the agony of this last renunciation. Kneeling there, his face buried in his hands, he feels the solemn stillness begin to vibrate with the sound of music, faint and far-off at first, but every moment coming nearer. Raising his head, he sees a door within the sanctuary open, and a procession of white-robed choristers throng into the cathedral. The smaller boys with their sweet childish treble, like the thin edge of a wedge, entering first, the volume of sound increasing until the deep-toned basses bring in the full diapason. A glory of color from the long lancet side windows blending with that from above the altar now fills the church, bathing their young faces with supernatural light, while their voices are lifted in angelic song. Their words fall softly and distinctly as dewdrops on the bruised spirit of the silent worshiper.

"When my last hour cometh," they sing, flocking like a troop of doves into the sanctuary, and, mated in pairs, proceeding down the long aisle towards the entrance door, continuing their hymn, soft and low as a lullaby. It seems to voice the very prayer the soldier is striving to offer.

"When my last hour cometh,  
    Fraught with strife and pain,  
When my dust returneth  
    To the dust again,

On thy strength relying,  
Through that mortal strife,  
Jesus, take me dying  
To immortal life."

They have reached the great entrance doors, which turn slowly on their hinges to admit a coffin borne by soldiers, and preceded by a priest saying aloud in tones that reach the vaulted roof, and are echoed back again: "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and the soldier knows that he is to assist at the last office that man can render his fellow-man. When the coffin is lowered to its resting-place before the altar, the soldier looks down on the face of the dead, which has been left exposed, and is startled to see his own face. Like a disembodied spirit, he seems to be present at his own obsequies, regarding the lifeless clay which has so lately been his habitation. The shock of this discovery is presently softened by the expression of the dead face. The brow is calm, the white eyelids are closed in peace, the lips have settled into the fine curves of perfect repose. The influence of this tranquillity steals into his soul. He is about to turn away, when he hears his name pronounced, "Hugh."

And Hugh Dallas, who from physical and spiritual exhaustion had fallen asleep, and whose last waking thoughts had taken shape in a vivid dream, opens his eyes and finds Madelaine bending over him. She had called him gently once or twice, and her voice probably suggested in his dream the choristers' hymn which he had sometimes heard her sing. Her blanched, terrified face showed that she too had feared that his spirit had passed away. He could not speak at first, but as soon

as his eyes met hers, they delivered the message of unchanging love which he had said would follow her always, living or dead.

Dorset's open letter lying by his side revealed to her the suffering caused by her innocent mistake. All the sorrow which had hitherto clouded her life never held such anguish as when she saw the change in Hugh's condition.

"O Hugh!" she moaned, in utter misery.

"It is all right," he said, making a supreme effort to comfort her.

"That letter!" cried Madelaine, in a wild burst of grief, "that wretched letter! It ought never to have been written. The man had no right to write it to me!"

"He could not help it," gasped Hugh, trying to smile.

"It has troubled you. It has made you ill, and you were so much better!"

"Don't fret, darling. The end was near from the first," brokenly.

"And I love you. I do love you *better* than I ever loved any one!"

His face brightened.

"And I've been true to you, true, true!" she sobbed.

"I know."

"O Hugh!"

"It's all right — all right," he murmured, closing his eyes.

His last conscious effort was to comfort Madelaine.

Late in the afternoon, while she held his hand and

the setting sun was casting the reflection of his grated window on the wall, he opened his eyes. With a brief, fleeting smile they rested for a moment on the familiar picture, and closed again. With a scarcely perceptible sigh, he breathed his last.

Hugh Dallas had escaped his prison bars, and Madeline was left alone with grief, — grief so overwhelming that she was stunned, for while she was conscious of innocence, her pangs of remorse were as keen as her sorrow. She felt in some sense responsible for Hugh's death, and yet she had been faithful to him. She realized now in the fullest sense that when she said she loved him better than she had ever loved any one, she had spoken truly. It is only to a man like Hugh that a woman gives her best love. For Dorset she had felt a strong personal attraction; his beauty moved her, his helplessness during a long illness had wakened her woman's tenderness. She had been swayed by all the sweet human influences of companionship and youth in the blood. But these temptations had been the innermost secret of her soul. She had never surrendered to them, never betrayed them. Her promised allegiance to Hugh she had kept inviolate as she had kept her faith in God, and yet she felt she must have greatly sinned, seeing her punishment was so great. Her involuntary weakness had helped to break the noblest heart that ever beat.

Her mind dwelt on this thought until she was unable to think of anything else.

"Oh, if I had not given him the wrong letter! If I had not given" — she went over and over again.

Late in the evening her friends, the Rothwells, be-



coming uneasy at her prolonged stay, came to look for her. They found her sitting by Hugh's bedside, dazed and distracted, looking at vacancy with tearless eyes.

The ladies, two gentle spinsters, were greatly touched by Hugh's quiet face and Madelaine's look of silent despair.

Lavater somewhere says, "The features of the human face, disturbed in life by the flux and reflux of events and passions, revert in death to their original design and become infinitely more noble and beautiful, as muddy water works itself clear when it is no longer disturbed."

So it was with Hugh.

"Madelaine dear," whispered Miss Rothwell, her eyes filling at the sight, "look at him; it will comfort you."

It was nature's remedy.

The perfect peace on Hugh's kindly face brought a rush of tears to Madelaine's dry eyes, and her aching breast burst forth in sobs.


The next day, by order of the hospital authorities, he was hurried to his burial. Only the Rothwells and Madelaine stood by when he was lowered to a nameless grave. But little he recked, for he had died a soldier's death, and was wept by the woman he loved.

A few days later, there was a general exchange of prisoners. It came too late for Hugh Dallas, and Madelaine, sad and solitary, returned alone to Richmond under a flag of truce.

## XXXVI.


CELA VA SANS DIRE.

SPRING has come round again. A year has passed since Larry Pritchard married Bo Disney on his death-bed. When his affairs were looked into, it was discovered that he had had the forethought to make handsome provision for Bo, besides remembering his nephews and nieces and even Jack for a small legacy in his will, this last as an amend to his sister for his opposition to the child. After Larry's death, Mrs. Key came to live permanently with Miss Patty, who, in addition to being old and lonely, was not in such good health as she had been. Larry's provision for Bo made her, as times went, exceedingly well off. She was a rich, young, pretty widow. Everybody knows what vantage-ground such qualifications give. Bo, or Mrs. Lawrence Pritchard, was easily the most admired woman in society. To the admirers who had always appreciated her good looks were now added the kind who appreciate money and those who do not appreciate one without the other, which, it is easy to see, includes the whole unencumbered sex. Bo loved admiration; it was the breath of her nostrils; but she was a very discreet young widow. She was not particularly elated by having money. She was not proud of the way she acquired it. The thought was only made palatable to



her by reminding herself that she had married poor Larry for her mother's sake. Her mother enjoyed the money, or rather the comfort it brought, and Bo enjoyed her enjoyment. It is the inevitable result of time and habit, however, to dull one's sensibilities to mental as well as material hair shirts, and Bo after a time felt the advantages of wealth more than the discomfort of the reflection as to how she obtained it. Wealth had brought her the power to indulge her generous impulses, which to her lavish temperament was even a greater privilege than the power to surround herself with pretty things, to dress well and to fare sumptuously every day, all of which Bo found very pleasant. To poor people who have seen much of life, it is comforting to remind themselves that money cannot give everything. Bo used to be incredulous of this fact. When she was a poor Treasury clerk with a disabled hand, she thought if she only had money she could be perfectly happy. But like the rest of the world, she discovered that money cannot give everything, and that in nine cases out of ten it is the one thing desired of all others that it cannot, or at least does not, give.

Bo was not unreasonable in her requirements. The one thing needed to make her perfectly happy was the little Frenchman, and he kept out of the way. St. Maur, who when they were both on the brink of starvation had asked her to marry him, now that she had more than enough for two, seemed to have forgotten there was such a thing as matrimony. She saw that he was getting more pinched and shabby every day, or every time she saw him, which was nothing like every





day. She knew that a War clerk's salary became every day less commensurate with the necessities of life, yet he was as gay and apparently as *insouciant* as ever. His clothes were brushed threadbare, and the frayed edges of his linen collars and cuffs were "shaved," as he called it, until they were fast disappearing; but he looked the same scrupulously neat, dear little Frenchman of better days. He wore his *monocle* and twirled his cane as jauntily as ever. He seemed to enjoy life *en garçon* sufficiently well not to wish to change. Once, in a moment of chivalrous enthusiasm, he had given Bo a chance to marry, and she had as chivalrously declined; now that the moment of enthusiasm had passed, and Bo, besides having plenty of money, had recovered the use of her hand, the situation was different. Circumstances alter cases.

He would continue, as he had said, to worship her far off as one worships the saints. He was not a marrying man. But Bo was no exception to the rule, she was a marrying woman. Now that she had plenty, she wanted to share her abundance with the man who had been willing to give her of his penury. But she could not tell him so, that is, not directly, and as yet she had discovered no way of imparting the information indirectly. His attitude towards Mrs. Lawrence Pritchard was wholly unlike what it had been to Bo Disney. She was now madame, and as far removed from him as the man in the moon. She almost wished she had taken him at his word and shared his crusts with him. But then her mother would have starved, and that was out of the question. What was to be done?


The cause of the Confederacy was tottering to its



close, but the women did not know it, and although times were tightening every day, they continued to make brave efforts to keep up the tone of things in Richmond. They were the last to say die. Bo, being in mourning, did not go into society, but she was as hospitable as ever, and society came to her. Everybody came oftener than St. Maur. In fact, he did not come at all. She enjoyed the comfortable little home she had made for her mother, her increased importance, her pretty clothes, her thousand and one friends, but there was always pain and hunger in her heart for the love she seemed to have lost.

She had not seen St. Maur for a long time, when one day she was making a visit to Mrs. Key. The weather being warm, they sat at an open window behind lace curtains, through which, unseen, they could see, if they wanted, the passers in the street. Mrs. Key's eyes were bent on Jack, who stood at her knee turning over the leaves of a book on her lap. He was nearly three years old now, appreciated pictures, and was beginning to have a fling at the alphabet. Bo, pretty and piquant in soft, shining black, with a gleam of white which did duty for a widow's cap within the rim of her bonnet, looked out of the window. It was about three o'clock, the hour when the departments closed, and the street swarmed with government clerks going home to their dinner. Bo, having been a government clerk herself, or for some other reason, continued to take an interest in their movements.

Jack, guided by the pictures in his book, was reciting, or what he called "reading," the story of "Muvvar Hubbard" and had got as far as



“ ‘When she dot dare the dog was laughin’,’ ”

laughing himself, showing all his little pearly teeth in imitation of the dog, when Bo, her eyes still following the government clerks, remarked, —

“ That is a clever child, Madelaine. You and Miss Patty have trained him well. His father will be proud of him when he sees him.”

Grave, sad Madelaine, graver and sadder than when we first met her, could not escape a certain consciousness when any allusion was made to Jack’s father, whose secret had been well kept between Miss Patty, Daniel, and herself. She always avoided the subject.

“ He is a nice child,” she said, stroking Jack’s curls.

“ I wonder if his father will know what to do with him when he gets him,” continued Bo.

“ What do you mean ? ”


“ If Jack’s mother is dead, his father is a widower, I suppose ? ”

“ Oh, yes,” assented Madelaine, trying to think of something else to talk about ; but Jack and his father drove out lighter topics, and Bo was too quick for her.

“ You must know,” said the latter, “ of all people, I pity widowers the most.”

“ More than widows, Bo ? ”

“ Oh, yes,” said Bo, who had apparently given some thought to the subject, probably because of one or two widowers among her admirers. “ They are such a lopsided set, as helpless and uncomfortable as a man with one arm. I’ve often wondered why the litany does not contain a petition for motherless children and widowers. They are quite as much to be pitied as the



‘fatherless children and widows.’ Indeed, it’s more logical to pray for widowers than widows, because woman was made for man, not man for woman, and when a man loses his wife, he loses what he is entitled to, what was made expressly for him. Then a woman has home and children to look after just as she had before her husband died, but a man’s home is nothing without a wife. It’s as dull and cheerless as a birdless cage.”

Madelaine, smiling at Bo’s volubility, was glad to steer into generalities.

“What about bachelors, Bo?”

“Oh, it’s different with bachelors. A man does not miss what he never had.”

Madelaine’s reply was arrested by a little start and exclamation from Bo, which the latter tried to cover with a cough, and looking out of the window, Madelaine saw St. Maur passing, accompanied by a pretty, foreign-looking girl, who was talking to him with an unmistakable air of intimacy.

“Do you know who that girl is?” asked Mrs. Key, ignoring Bo’s discomposure.

“Know her?” arranging her widow’s veil. “No, I have never even seen her before. She looks as though she might be a compatriot of his.”

“She has passed here with him every day for the past week on his way home from the department.”

“I have lost sight of M. de St. Maur for some time. I don’t know who his friends are now,” said Bo, her heart beating violently, but speaking with admirable coolness.

It was impossible, however, to keep up a conversa-

tion on indifferent subjects long, and pretty soon Bo went away.

"Every day for a week! That girl, young, beautiful, looking up in his face so confidently! Frenchmen are so fiendishly fickle. Is this jealousy? My God! this is the worst pain yet," groaned poor Bo, walking home, looking neither to the right nor left, ignoring her acquaintances, and hiding her face under her crape veil. The first impulse of a wounded creature is to escape observation, and Bo wanted to get by herself.

Having once come under her notice, it was in the nature of things that Bo should hear of the pretty stranger again, even if eyes, ears, and every sense had not strained to find out all about her. The very next day, she overheard two young men in a street-car talking about a pretty Miss Crozet from New Orleans. She settled in her mind at once that that was the girl who walked home from the department with St. Maur every day. She was too proud and too miserable to ask questions, but here and there she gleaned a little about the girl she hated.

People spoke freely about the girl who was always seen with St. Maur, and never anywhere in society. Her dark beauty, her foreign air and vivacity as seen on the street, were all the more attractive that there seemed no way of getting nearer to them.

But so marked a personality could not long remain shrouded in mystery, and there were reasons why the girl should come before the public in a modest way. After agonizing over the matter for several days, Bo learned all about her rival in a morning visit. One of those charitable ladies known in every community,

denly remembering that she was acting on a bare supposition.

"Crozet."

"Ah, I thought so, and has she no friends?"

"Yes, one friend," — Bo clenched her teeth, — "but he is as badly off as herself. She has a half-brother here in one of the departments, a M. de St. Maur, who makes barely enough to keep body and soul together."

"M. de St. Maur? a half-brother?" gasped Bo, in whose mind this statement made an upheaval as sudden, as complete, as wild and emotional as any French revolution. She could scarcely hear herself speak for the drumming, singing, huzzaing, going on in her heart and ears.

"Do you know him?" asked Mrs. Brownrigg, who knew nothing of Bo's affair of the heart, and luckily could not see her inward tempest of emotion.

The matter-of-fact question brought Bo somewhat to her senses. "Know him?" she repeated. "I used to know him, a good-looking little fellow in the War Department. But I did not know he had a half-sister," wondering that in the old times he had never told her about his sister.

"Oh, she has just come to Richmond. I think her mother, who in a second marriage made a *mésalliance* and lived in New Orleans; has recently died and left the poor girl without money and without friends except this half-brother. I doubt if he ever saw her before. I became interested in her through a sister of charity from New Orleans, who has been helping to nurse one of my sons, who, you may remember, was badly wounded at the battle of the Wilderness."

"What did you say her terms are?"

"The equivalent of ten dollars in gold for the course."

"After all, I *can* give up something to help her," said Bo. "I will take a ticket, Mrs. Brownrigg, and if you are willing, I will try and dispose of others."

"Willing? My dear child, I am only too delighted."

"Then suppose you give me half of what you have there."

"I am as much obliged to you, Mrs. Pritchard, as if it were for myself."

"And I," said Bo, "am as much obliged to you for letting me know about Miss Crozet as if it were for *myself*. You have made me very happy, Mrs. Brownrigg," pressing the old lady's hand, and thinking the benevolent expression of her face made her almost beautiful in spite of wrinkles and a poke bonnet, "in giving me an opportunity to help her."

Mrs. Brownrigg did not understand this sudden change of front, nor did she stop to consider it. She was too much pleased at the success of her mission to waste time in speculating as to why and wherefore. It was not the first time that a young woman had changed her mind between two breaths, nor would it be the last. When she was gone, Bo, utterly regardless of bombazine and crape, caught up a sofa cushion and waltzed with it round the room, and then sat down to the piano and fired off the Marseillaise. No other music could keep time with the bravuras of her relieved and jubilant heart.

The French course became a brilliant success. Mrs.

Pritchard disposed of her tickets so easily that it was not long before she applied to Mrs. Brownrigg, who was not so successful, for the remainder. Miss Crozet and her brother were astonished at her good fortune. It seemed incredible that so many young women were able to indulge in French lessons at a time of such general depression. The equivalent of ten dollars in gold seemed a mine to most persons. Mrs. Pritchard did not attend the course, but all her friends did, and the heart of the pretty young creature from New Orleans was relieved of part of its sorrows.

The day of reckoning came. It was on this wise.

One morning, St. Maur, crossing the lobby of the War Office, encountered two gentlemen, old cronies, who had met there and stopped to exchange salutations and commiserate each other on the sad times. One of them, hailed him as he was making his way out of the building.

"St. Maur, I'm glad to see you. I want to tell you how much pleased my daughter is with your sister, Miss Crozet, as a teacher. My girl says it is the greatest privilege to attend her class, the pleasantest episode of the day."

"So does mine," added the other, seeing the genuine pleasure in St. Maur's countenance; "a privilege for which she can never be too grateful to Mrs. Pritchard."

The first speaker, who seemed to have been better instructed by his daughter, made a movement to forestall this confidence, but the words were out past recall.

"Mrs. Pritchard!" stammered St. Maur. "Ah, I see. You are very good. I am so glad my sister



gives satisfaction. I shall have great pleasure to tell her," with his inimitable bow. Then with polite inquiries as to the health of the cronies' respective families, he made his adieux.

With a word, the mystery was solved. This was the meaning of Mimi's unprecedented success. This was why so many penniless girls were able to pay the equivalent of ten dollars in gold for French lessons, when they were wearing homespun and living on salt meat and black beans. Mrs. Pritchard had bought up most of the tickets, probably all, and given them to her friends. St. Maur's quick eye had even detected the first speaker's annoyance at his companion's frankness. Doubtless Mrs. Pritchard had tried to keep the matter a secret. That was probably the reason why she had not joined the class herself. But there are men who are incapable of understanding or keeping a woman's small secrets, and the chances are that they will blurt them out at the wrong time and place. It had happened so on this occasion.

That evening about twilight, Mrs. Pritchard's servant, believing her mistress to be in, admitted a visitor to the parlor. While she was gone in search of the lady, Bo, who had been out, let herself into the house with a latchkey.

Peeping into the parlor to see if the lamps were lit, and finding it dark and apparently empty, she was proceeding on her way upstairs, when her steps were arrested and her heart stood still as she heard her name pronounced.

"Mrs. Pritchard."

The old familiar voice, so long unheard, its sweet,

deferential intonation, its delicate accent, so stirred Bo that she could only falter, —

“ M. de St. Maur ! ”

She was so moved that she never knew how they found themselves in the parlor together.

Standing before Bo in the dusky room, with only light enough to see the outline of her face, the white gleam of her widow's cap, and the soft lustre of her eyes, St. Maur repeated, —

“ Mrs. Pritchard.”

The tone was so grave that Bo asked timidly, —

“ Are you displeased with me ? ”

Something in St. Maur's throat prevented his speaking. A sudden dimness in his eyes banished Mrs. Pritchard and her widow's cap. Only Bo, the dear little loving girl, stood there, asking if he was displeased with her. There was silence for a moment, and then he answered deliberately, although he knew he was not telling the truth, —

“ Yes, I am displeased with you.”

“ What have I done ? Won't you sit down and tell me ? ”

“ You have been depriving yourself to help my sister — and me.”

“ Oh ! ” gasped Bo, who had been at great pains to cover up her tracks. “ I — I have tried to help your sister a little, but I have not deprived myself of anything,” she stammered, doing some prevarication on her own account. “ It has been the greatest pleasure,” which was absolutely true.

“ You do not know how I felt when I discovered it to-day for the first time.”

"Were you angry? Did you think I had taken a liberty?"

"I was distressed that my sister owed to charity what we believed was remuneration for work."

"Charity? From me? How can you speak so?" winking back some tears at his severity.

"You have put me under obligations I can never repay, but I wish to acknowledge them."

"Oh, don't, don't!"

"I have come to thank you for your generosity and delicate consideration in helping my sister."

"And now that you have done it, won't you please not say anything more about it?"

"It's a poor return for your goodness, but it is all I can do. Why may I not thank you?"

"Because it seems not exactly honest to be getting so much thanks for what has given me more happiness than anything since — since — a long time."

Again something took St. Maur by the throat, and he could not speak for a moment.

"And you did not deprive yourself of anything?"

"Only a superfluity. I had been putting by some money to buy a black silk dress, which you know costs about a hundred dollars a yard now. It seems providential, because I had so much rather have taken your sister's tickets."

"And now you will not have the black silk dress."

"No, and I am glad, for I do not want any more black dresses," blushing in the dark at her own ingenuousness.

"Would you mind telling me how many of my sister's tickets you took?"

"Not so many, after all."

"But how many?"

"Well, at one time I took half."

"And then?"

"The — the other half."

"Two halves make the whole. And did nobody want to take French lessons?"

"Yes, *Everybody*. *Indeed*, that is true. But you know how it is now, *nobody* could afford it."

"It seems to me you ought to get a great deal of French for all those tickets," trying to speak lightly and succeeding in speaking bitterly.

"No more than I want," breathed Bo softly.

The soft breath fanned fire into flame.

"Mrs. Pritchard, do you know what you are tempting me to do?" cried St. Maur fiercely.

"Nothing wrong, am I?"

"Something I have sworn not to do."

"Ah, what can that be?" in a frightened whisper.

"To ask a woman with money to marry a pauper."

"I don't see the good of money unless it makes people happy," whimpered Bo.

"Boadicea!"

Bo buried her face in her hands, trembling. Her name on his lips was like a bow drawn across the strings of a violin. She quivered from head to foot. It was some seconds before she found her voice, and then she ventured for the first time to call him, —

"Henri!"

Her low, tremulous tone was trumpet-tongued to St. Maur. It stirred every drop of his Gallic blood. It made him false to his oath. He seized her hands

and drew her to himself, he encircled her in his arms and pressed his lips on hers.

"*Chérie*, you make me forswear myself. I *swore* I would not ask you to marry me because I have nothing to offer you but the love of a pauper."

"It is very wrong to swear," said Bo, reduced to platitudes.

"*Will* you marry me, Boadicea?"

She did not answer. Her heart was too full for words. Her bonnet strings seemed to choke her; she untied them, and laid the bonnet with its widow's cap on a chair beside her.

"*Will* you marry me?" he repeated, anxious in his turn. "Why do you not speak? *Say* something, dearest."

"Oh, Henri, it — it goes without saying," she cried with a radiant blush, which he could not see but divined.

## XXXVII.

### CRUCIFIXION OF THE SOUL.

SPRING dawned once more, and for the last time, on Richmond as the capital of the Confederacy. April, with her changeful face, barely peeped in on the doomed city, and the second day it fell. The second of the month happened to be Sunday, and it came in with its traditional quiet peacefulness. The equally traditional beauty and uncertainty of the season were not wanting. The city was enveloped in a soft haze, alternating in sunshine and showers. When morning broke, the citizens did not dream that it was for the last time; that as a people they should never know another quiet Sunday or another fitful April day.

Miss Patty Pritchard, whose heart was bound up in the cause of the Confederacy, had of late been ill and feeble, but she still knitted stockings for "the boys," and looked forward to peace, with success on the Southern side. As life advances, hope's outposts are moved farther on. "Dupe of to-morrow even from a child," as poor Cowper sang, Miss Patty in her youth built happiness on a first love, which faded while it was yet morning. One by one her ideals failed, and her loving heart still stretched out for objects of tenderness. Jack's parentage had been a desolating blow, but with the courage of a strong nature she had rallied from the

disappointment to centre all her affection, ambition, and enthusiasm in the Southern cause. So long as the Stars and Bars floated above her, there was something to live for, or if need be to die for. The last passion enshrined in her heart was the fire of patriotism. Men talk of first love. What are its melodramas and comedies to the tragedy of a last love, which ends in disappointment, with death for the last act?

Miss Patty was not able to go to church that April Sunday morning, and Madelaine remained at home with her.

The early part of the day for them passed in its usual quietude. The old lady sat propped up in bed with her Bible before her. The windows of her room were open, and she inhaled the sweet April air with the indefinable sense of revival that comes even to the aged in springtime, while eyes and ears were gladdened by the tender green of elms in front of the house and the twitter of birds amid the foliage. When the last stroke of church-bells had floated away into silence, and a hushed Sabbath stillness had settled on the town, Miss Patty dropped off into a doze, and dreamed that she was young, and mankind at peace. Long before the usual hour for the close of church services and the quiet stir of home-returning congregations, Mrs. Key, reading in her aunt's room, was startled by a great commotion in the street. She rose and closed the window, lest the noise should waken Miss Patty.

Madelaine was accustomed to commotions in the street. The populace never failed to respond vociferously to war news. She thought she understood

the whole gamut of popular expression, — joyous acclamations of victory, stifled murmurs of apprehension, sullen thunders of disaster and defeat. These great demonstrations of common feeling in a common cause always agitated her intensely with hope or fear. Her heart joined in the loud huzzas of the multitude in its joy, and cried "Woe is me" in its sorrow. But there was a note, a quality, a something unusual in the present disturbance that struck a chill to her soul. It was no longer a common feeling in a common cause, but the angry clamor of a rabble, mingled with wild shouts of triumph and savage laughter. Suddenly the street in front of the house was filled with people, as if all the congregations in town had been dismissed simultaneously, men and women hurrying frantically as if fleeing from some terrible impending fate. Mrs Key, alone in the house with her aunt, did not dare to speak for fear of disturbing the latter, from whom it was necessary to keep all agitation. Whatever danger threatened, she could not desert her post. By and by a movement downstairs indicated that one or more of the servants had returned from church. Madelaine, trembling in every limb, stole down to the kitchen, to see if she could find out from them the cause of the tumult.

Only Afra was there. That is, to Madelaine's dazed sight it seemed to be Afra, and yet not Afra. Some influence had so changed the woman that it would have been difficult to recognize her but for her being in the Pritchard kitchen. The jolly, good-humored cook was like a creature possessed. In an ecstasy of emotion she wept, laughed, and praised God by turns.



Afra, on occasions, had been known to get intoxicated. Madelaine feared this was the case now.

"Afra," she said sternly, "what is the matter with you? Are you?" —

The woman understood.

"Yes, Miss Madlin," she cried, clapping her hands and swaying from side to side, "I'se drunk. Glory be to God, I'se drunk wid liberty."

"For God's sake, what do you mean?"

"I mean dat General Lee's done give up Richmon', an' is retreatin', dat de Yankees is a-comin', an' befo' to-morrer's sun goes down every nigger in dis lan' 'll be free, *free*, yes, my God, *FREE!*" shouted Afra.

Madelaine's brain reeled, and everything turned black before her. The woman raved, but her ravings carried conviction to her hearer. Grasping a table to steady herself, Madelaine said, as calmly as she could, —

"Afra, don't make such a noise. I want to break this to Aunt Patty as gently as I can. Ask Daniel and the others when they come in not to make a noise."

Afra, overcome with emotion, sank into a chair, alternately wiping floods of tears from her eyes and hugging herself as she sobbed, —

"Yes, I mus' hug dis nigger 'cos she's free. She never been free befo'. But she free now, glory be to God."

"Afra, do you understand me?"

"Yes, Miss Madlin, I onderstan', I ain't gwine to make no mo noise. I'se jest wor'd out wid joy," throwing herself back in a chair, limp and maudlin from the reaction of her excitement.

In the big, old-fashioned kitchen, in which Afra had cooked so many tempting meals, now shining with Sunday brightness and redolent with savory odors of soup for dinner, hung a long row of bells connected with different parts of the house. A sharp peal from one of these suddenly started the already overwrought nerves of mistress and servant. Afra, with an hysterical scream, started to her feet to answer the summons at the front door.

Mrs. Key, outwardly calm, and pale and cold as death, forbade her moving.

"Stay where you are, Afra. You are not fit to go. I will open the door."

She left the woman hugging herself, weeping and crooning over her new-found freedom.

As Madelaine dragged herself upstairs, she felt even in that first moment that all of life had changed. The blow was greater then than at any other time. Afterwards, she met and struggled with new conditions step by step. Now, she dimly recognized the awful change in its entirety, vast, vague, and all the more terrible for its indefiniteness. She could not think. Fortunately; she was so stunned, she could not even feel acutely. She was oppressed, stifled, like one struggling with a horrible nightmare. The sharper agonies came afterwards.

At the front door, she met Bo, since several months Madame de St. Maur, and her mother, Mrs. Disney. Behind them, in the street, she saw a wildly excited mob.

Bo and her mother had only to look at Madelaine's face to know that she had heard.

"You know?" said Bo, whose eyes were red with weeping.

"I know."

"We came to tell you. Word was sent to the President at church."

"It is worse than death," said Mrs. Disney, who, scarcely able to stand, was supported by her daughter.

"Yes," said Madelaine, leading the way into the parlor. "But is there no hope? Where is M. de St. Maur? What does he say? I've seen nobody but the cook."

"Henri," answered Bo, her tears welling up afresh at mention of his name, "has no hope. He is with his chief at the War Department, gathering up and destroying papers. He bade me good-by," sobbing. "I don't know when I shall see him again."

"Don't, don't cry," pleaded Madelaine. "It is not good for you, and it unnerves me, and you know I have to prepare Aunt Patty."

"O Madelaine!" cried Bo, throwing herself into Mrs. Key's arms and burying her face on her friend's shoulder. "You are so strong. I came to you for comfort."

"There is no comfort, darling. We have only to endure. Do that for your Henri's sake, and for the sake of — everybody," caressing the little woman, who felt more keenly than anything the uncertainty of her husband's fate, and wanted to be comforted.

"I was not always like this," said Bo, with quivering lips, trying to endure. "I used to think the Yankees could never make me shed tears, but now" — breaking down.

"I know, I know," soothed Madelaine.

"And Miss Patty does not know?" said Mrs. Disney calmly, looking very pale and proud as she sat upright in her chair, her physical weakness equaled by her courage to accept the situation without complaint.

"No, and I am afraid it will kill her."

"This is not a time to fear death," said Mrs. Disney, rising to go.

These friends wrung each other's hands in parting, but nothing more was said. Words could express nothing adequate. We place our hands on our mouths and keep silence in the presence of one dead friend. Here hope itself was dead. Bo raised her lips to Madelaine's in dumb despair, and Madelaine, with a breaking heart, returned the mute caress. Mrs. Disney, with set, white face, more pathetic than tears, bade Mrs. Key good-morning with the punctilious politeness of yesterday, as if since yesterday a nation had not been lost to the world.

At the front door, Bo and her mother met Jack coming in with his nurse, the latter looking as dismayed and frantic as everybody else. Jack, excited by the commotion, was in the gayest spirits, whirling a toy watchman's rattle.

At sight of the child, Bo's eyes filled again.

"Dear baby!" she cried, embracing him with newborn maternal tenderness and showering kisses on his soft cheeks. "Oh, mamma, what is to become of all the dear babies?"

Jack wriggled out of her arms.

"I ain't a baby!" highly insulted. "I'm a boy!"

he cried, darting into the house in search of Aunt Maddie.

Madelaine, too, caught him in her arms and pressed him to her bosom with a long, trembling kiss. It rushed over her that, if the war had really come to an end with the defeat of the South, Jack's fortunes were with the conquerors. Here was another drop in her overflowing cup of sorrow. The child's beautiful, bright face, so long her chief delight, became a source of keenest pain.

Jack felt that something was wrong. He looked wistfully in her grave face. He measured her griefs by his own.

"Is you hungry? I 'se hungry too."

Madelaine laughed and cried. The little fellow unconsciously struck two chords at once.

There was still Miss Patty to help through the last great disappointment of life. Madelaine prayed for strength, for tenderness, for right words with which to comfort the gentle heart she feared would break under the blow.

She opened the door of her aunt's room softly, hoping to find the old lady still asleep. Flesh and blood yearned to put off the evil hour as long as possible. But Miss Patty was awake and apparently refreshed.

She greeted her niece at once with, "There seems to be a great noise in the street. Is anything the matter? Has there been another battle? Or is it only the usual Sunday rumors?"

"Sunday rumors, aunt. Would you like something to eat now?"

"No, thank you. What are the rumors to-day?"

"Something more serious than usual."

"I hope it has as little foundation as usual," cheerfully.

"I pray so."

"You look very grave, dear. Do you think there is really anything serious the matter?"

"I think so."

"Then tell me. Don't leave me in suspense."

"Tidings have come from General Lee's army that if his line is not reformed at once there will be trouble."

"Trouble?" repeated Miss Patty. Then, covering her eyes with her hands she remained silent for a time, in which Madelaine did not doubt that she prayed that General Lee's line might be reformed.

After a while, she looked up. Her face was very pale, but she spoke calmly. "Now, as at all times, we are in God's hands; we will still trust in Him." She was anxious, but far from suspecting the worst.

Madelaine spent the afternoon trying cautiously and lovingly to prepare her mind for the whole truth.

Fortunately the uproar in the street gradually subsided. Darkness and silence, but not rest or slumber, settled on the town. Only God knew the anguish of that night's vigils. Miss Patty was one of the few who slept without knowing what was coming in the morning. Madelaine's care saved her the long agony of expectation. But morning came, and with it, "crucifixion of the soul." With the first gray light of dawn, suddenly and without a moment's warning, the town was shaken to its foundation by an appalling explosion that curdled men's blood. Every house trembled, as if with the shock of an earthquake.

Madelaine, shivering with terror, was at her aunt's bedside in a moment. There was one who needed comfort even more than herself.

"What is it, Madelaine?" cried Miss Patty, peering through the dim light into her niece's face with horror-stricken eyes.

"I don't know, aunt," kneeling by the bed and putting her strong, young arms round the frail, trembling old woman. "But I am with you. Nobody can take me from you; we will die, if need be, together."

At short intervals, the explosions, loud as a hundred peals of thunder, were repeated. Madelaine felt the floor tremble beneath her, while the glass in windows and mirrors shivered and broke into atoms. In addition, the room was presently lighted with the glare of a great fire, whose flames reddened the sky as with blood. Imagination has never pictured the day of doom with greater horrors. Many believed it was the day of doom.

As the day advanced and Miss Patty learned that the fire and explosions at the arsenal were the result of accident, and not the coming of the enemy, she took heart. Hope was hard to kill.

"Madelaine, do you think they will occupy Richmond?"

"I am afraid so, dearest."

All day, while Federal troops were pouring into the lower part of the town, Miss Patty was hoping that General Lee would still be able to defend it. All day, Mrs. Key answered her questions as best she could.

"Madelaine, is there no hope in the west?"

"Nobody can tell me, dear aunt."

“No hope in the south?”

“I do not know.”

Once, in an interval between the explosions, a band of music was heard.

Miss Patty started up in bed with a heart-broken cry, —

“Madelaine, they have come!”

The band was playing “The Star Spangled Banner.”



## XXXVIII.

### JACK HORNER.

IN the story of Picciola, a little flower, springing up from between the stones of a prison floor and unfolding new beauties every day, brought comfort to a prisoner's heart and lightened the dreary walls of his cell. In the Pritchard house of mourning, a little child, like the prisoner's flower, was the comfort and sunshine of its inmates. It was impossible to be altogether sad in the presence of Jack's bright face, or even to be always grave, for he was full of the comicalities inherent to the borderland between ignorance and knowledge. A healthy, happy child, life to him was one elysian present, with no past to regret and no future to dread. In very pity, one hesitated to cloud his innocent gayety with tears and gloom. Wherever he came with his boyish glee, the clouds lifted, and there seemed to be something to live for, after all. To make an effort for the sake of others is one step towards taking up life again when we have thought to lay it down in despair. Not many days after the occupation of Richmond, Miss Patty received a letter which agitated her greatly. After pondering over it for some time, she surprised Mrs. Key by insisting on getting out of bed and being dressed. Then she wanted to be taken downstairs, but finding she was too weak for that, she

consented to remain in her own room. When everything was arranged to her satisfaction, and she had never been so scrupulously particular, old and broken as she was, she said to her niece, —

“Madelaine, there is one duty in life left for me to perform, and I hope to discharge that to-day.”

“Aunt, while life lasts you will find duties,” said Mrs. Key, wondering whither this tended.

“I have received a note from General Dorset, asking to see me and his son when convenient to me.”

“And will you see him?”

“Yes. You know I have always intended to give him up to his father, whoever he might be, when the war ended, and now — everything is ended for me.”

“Dear aunt!”

“It — it” — stammered the old lady.

“Will it not be too much for you, dear?”

“Too much? Oh, no,” recovering herself. “What has to be done has to be, and the sooner it is over the better, so I have appointed one o’clock to-day.”

“One o’clock!” cried Madelaine, aghast at the suddenness of the thing. “Why, it is twelve now.”

“So much the better for me,” not knowing how long her courage would hold out. “Here comes the child now,” her face softening at the sound of pattering feet.

The next moment, Jack, who was now hard upon four, fair and ruddy, with clear brown eyes and curly brown head, ran into the room, talking to himself and all who chose to listen. He spoke fairly well except for the stumbling block of *th*, which he lisped. He held a ginger cake in one hand and an apple in the other, from which he took alternate bites.

"So good!" he cried, smacking his lips, "want some?" putting them to Miss Patty's mouth and Madelaine's.

"Jack," said Miss Patty solemnly, stifling the sobs that would rise when she thought of parting with him.

"Yes 'm," eying his cake, which disappeared faster than his apple.

"I have something to tell you."

"Anozzer time," said Jack, anticipating something grave from the tone of her voice, and preparing to run away.

"Listen, Jack," said Mrs. Key, with a detaining hand on his shoulder.

The child looked up in her face and smiled, then, leaning against her knee, he stopped to hear what Miss Patty had to say.

"Jack, your father is coming to-day."

Jack paused a moment. This was something new to him. His eyes grew round and big.

"Our Farzer in Heaven?" he asked.

"No, Jack, your papa."

"My papa? Have I got a papa?" he cried, dropping his refreshments in Madelaine's lap, his face beaming with delight.

"Yes," in a low, broken tone.

"A papa like Ted Brown's and ozzer boys'?"

"Yes."

"And will he ride me on his back and give me goodies like Ted's papa?" frisking about and clapping his hands in the wildest spirits.

"Yes," said Miss Patty, bursting into tears. This

unknown father was already drawing the child's heart to himself.

With divine instinct, the boy ran to her and drew her hands from her eyes.

"Jack love *you*, too."

The scene was too much for Miss Patty's calmness, all of which she needed for the coming interview, and Madelaine led the boy out of the room.

When they reached his nursery, he fled to an open window which overlooked their next door neighbors', the Browns, garden. Ted was there, happy and dirty, with a small spade, digging up worms.

"Ted! Ted!" shouted Jack, swelling with pride, "I've got a papa, too."

"I don't b'lieve yer," shouted the other, who enjoyed the superiority of having a papa.

"I'll show him to you when he comes; and, Ted," eagerly.

"What?"

"Which had you razzar have, a papa or a pony?"

This was a poser. Ted stuck his spade between his knees and pondered.

"I dunno."

This conversation would have continued indefinitely, but that Mrs. Key drew Jack from the window to put on a clean frock in which to see his papa.

At one o'clock, Dorset came. He had been counting the minutes until the hour arrived. When he was shown into the old familiar parlor, the remembrance of the past rushed over him like a flood. It was in this house he had first seen his son; here he had met Mrs. Key; here, when a stranger and at death's door, he had been ten-

derly nursed back to life ; above all, it was here his outcast boy had found home and friends ; and now he was coming back as one of the conquering enemy. What was he to say ? What was he to do ?

He had little time to prepare his words, for he had scarcely entered the parlor when he was asked to walk up to Miss Pritchard's room.

Miss Patty was alone when he went in. The change which had come over her since they parted made the interview all the more painful. The energetic, cheerful soldier's friend was a shattered old woman, with trembling voice and hands. She tried to rise when he entered. She was expecting General Dorset, a Federal officer, an enemy, invader, conqueror, but the face of the man at the door recalled the past so vividly as to banish for a moment the present.

"Captain Hardwick !" she faltered, sinking back in her chair.

The cry was a keynote which struck out his response. It came rushing to his lips in a torrent.

"Yes, Hardwick ;" coming and standing humbly before her, his voice trembling like her own. "You were so good to Hardwick that, wherever his brave spirit is to-day, he surely is grateful for your intention. He would thank you as I thank you for him and for myself. But it is not Hardwick's boy to whom you have given a home and a mother's care, he is Dorset's ; and Dorset can never be grateful enough. My life spent in your service could not repay your goodness ; but you will let me thank you ? You will not refuse my gratitude ? You will not always turn away from me ?" he pleaded, his face strongly moved, his voice husky with tears.

This was not the interview Miss Patty had expected, — a man more agitated than herself, deprecating her coldness, begging her favor for his son's sake. It was in her nature to forget everything but the individual suffering before her, the young father whose soul yearned and was in travail over his firstborn.

"You have come for your boy?" she said, with the same gentleness she used to those "other" soldiers in their trouble.

"I have come to look at him," he replied, as a man dying of thirst would ask for a drop of cool water.

"You knew I promised God and myself to keep him until the war ended, and then — to give him up. He is yours now."

"May I not see him, to try him?" entreated Dorset. "He may not want to come to me."

Miss Patty touched a bell, and when a servant came she told her to bring "Master Jack."

With the first mention of his name, Jack, whom Madelaine held on her knee to keep him still, so restless had he become at the idea of seeing his papa, sprang out of her arms.

"Come, Aunt Maddie, let's go and see my farzer," he cried excitedly.

"No, dear, I will stay here. Good-by, darling," showering kisses on his baby mouth.

"Deed, Miss Madlin you'd better come," interposed the servant. "Miss Patty look like she gwine to faint."

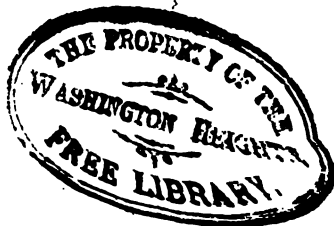
Overwhelming as was the idea of meeting Dorset again, Madelaine could not hesitate. She feared every moment for her aunt, whose hold on life seemed

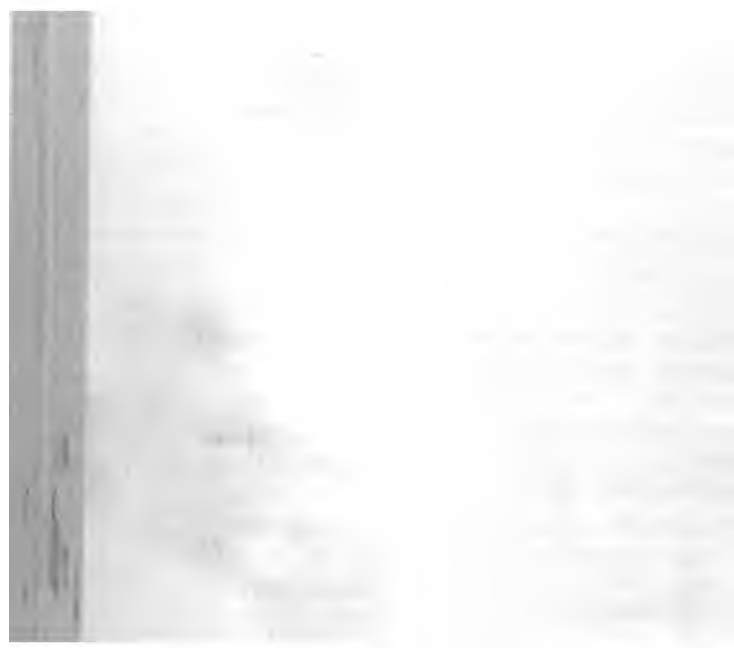
weaker every day, and to whom the occasion was necessarily harrowing.

Fresh from Jack's kisses, and blushing all over, she slowly followed the boy, who sped like a dart along the passage to Miss Patty's door. There a fit of shyness overtook him. He held back, with his finger in his mouth, and peeped in. Seeing a big, strong man, with bright buttons on his coat and love in his eyes, holding out his arms, he rushed into them, and father and son were clasped in a long, speechless embrace. Then Jack, who felt more of a man than ever with a father to back him, insisted on being put down to stand on his own legs. Still holding his father's hand in one of his, as if he never intended to let go, with the other he seized Aunt Maddie's, being not disposed to lose one adorer because he had found another.

As his little hands touched the hand of each, he completed a chain through which shot a thrill that made Dorset and Madelaine tremble. They did not dare to look at each other. Their glance centred on Miss Patty, on whose pale face had settled the peace of perfect renunciation. Jack, glancing up into the grave but glowing faces of the two friends he held in his grasp, sighed with delight, and his countenance radiated with the self-satisfaction of

"What a good boy am I!"







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